















OBSERVATIONS  
ON THE  
NATURE AND TENDENCY  
OF THE  
DOCTRINE OF MR. HUME,  
CONCERNING  
THE RELATION  
OF  
CAUSE AND EFFECT.

BY  
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*Second Edition, enlarged.*



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FROM the very considerable length of many of the Notes, the Author regrets, that, if read in their present situation, during the first perusal of the work, they destroy that continuity of argument, which it was his great wish to preserve. He would have placed them at the close of the Volume, had he known their extent in sufficient time; but those of greatest length, which relate to Mr. Hume's original Treatise of Human Nature, were not written till a very large part of the work had passed through the press. He must therefore leave it to the kindness of his Readers to rectify the error, and must request them to follow the continued text, without interrupting and suspending the argument, by attention to the Notes. These, being rather discussions of subjects connected with the general argument, than necessary elucidations of it, may be afterwards read, as if *appended*.

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#### ERRATA.

Page 29, line 14. For *the philosophers*, read *philosophers*.

—124, — 6 of the note, for *observations*, read *observations*.

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## PREFACE

TO THE FIRST EDITION.



THE Author of the following Observations is too sensible of the respect which is due to the Public, not to feel some reluctance, in giving to it the work of a few days. A metaphysical question seems, at first view, to have so little in it of local or temporary interest, that, when there is no opportunity of discussing it completely, it may be delayed without any loss. But, in the present case, there are circumstances, which claim, even for one of the abstrusest questions of metaphysics, the indulgence usually given to the fleeting matters of the day.

A PHILOSOPHER, of great and deserved scientific celebrity, recently appointed to the chair of mathematics in the university of Edinburgh, has been opposed, for his approbation of Mr. Hume's Essay on necessary connection, by a body of men, who, from the general literary character and the sanctity of their profession, may be presumed to be at once well acquainted with the nature of heresy, and charitably sparing in the imputation of it. On a reference from them, this subject, unquestionably of the greatest importance, is about to come for decision before the highest ecclesiastical court in Scotland. It occurred, therefore, to the Author of the following pages, that it would not be uninteresting, to examine minutely the steps by which Mr. Hume was led to his general conclusion on the Nature of Cause and Effect, that, by appreciating the value of the separate propositions, we might be the better able to discover the truth or the falsehood, as



well as the tendency, of the whole connected doctrine. In this investigation, he has endeavoured to avoid every allusion to the personal circumstances which called it forth, and to treat the question exactly in the same manner as he would have done, had no reference on the subject been pending before any tribunal.



## PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.



THE Essay which follows is now presented to the lovers of metaphysical disquisition, in a larger form than that in which it originally appeared. As it was then written chiefly with the view of giving some satisfaction to the public mind, on an obscure and difficult subject of controversy, to which peculiar circumstances had attracted a very general interest, it was limited, as strictly as possible, to an examination of the theory on which the controversy had arisen. In the present edition, I have ventured occasionally to take a wider range, and to add such reasonings and reflec-

tions, as seemed necessary to elucidate fully the very important questions which are involved in the philosophy of cause and effect. At the same time, I trust that I have added nothing, which does not serve to throw additional light on those peculiar opinions of Mr. Hume, which it was my primary object to discuss.

Of the error which has led philosophers to magnify his scepticism, by representing him as denying, not merely the *perception* or *inference* of power, as a quality of bodies, but the very *idea* of power, as an existing phenomenon of mind, no notice was taken in the former edition; as it was thought that a simple statement of his real doctrine would be sufficient to correct the error. Its universal prevalence, however, perhaps required a more particular confutation; and, accordingly, in the present edition, the mistake of Dr. Reid, which may be supposed to have had the chief influence in

prejudicing the public sentiment on the subject, is examined at considerable length.

If the criticism on the metaphysical style of Mr. Hume be severer than coincides with the general opinion, I trust it will not be supposed to have arisen from any wish of detracting from the reputation of that eminent philosopher. The talents, which he undoubtedly possessed, are of so high a rank, that he may well bear to be estimated according to his real merit; and it would be as absurd to deny his acuteness and subtlety, and the easy graces of his composition, as it is unnecessary for his fame, to assert, that his mode of scientific demonstration is faultless. It is, indeed, scarcely possible to imagine a more convincing proof of that want of regularity and perspicuity of statement, which I have ventured to object, than the fact—if, on examination, it be found to be a fact—that, from the first appearance

of his theory of causation till now, he has been universally believed to assert a proposition, which is not merely altogether different from the real doctrine of his work, but is in direct contradiction to the great argument which pervades it.

THE analysis of the particular theory is attempted to be so conducted in the following Essay, as to be in truth an analysis of our belief of causation, and, consequently, of our idea of power. A series of analytical inquiries of this kind, if conducted with precision, would probably remove much of that obscurity which at present darkens our metaphysics: for we must not assent to the opinion of those, who consider the discussions of metaphysics as relating only to verbal definition of phenomena previously understood, and to the mere arrangements of nomenclature, which afford no addition to our real knowledge. It is a science which,

though it may not deserve those extravagant honours that were once lavished on it, is assuredly a science of no vulgar rank. But it is as *a science of analysis*, that the philosophy of mind must be considered, when we look with great expectation to its susceptibility of improvement. There may undoubtedly be direct synthesis in mind, as well as in matter. New ideas may be presented to our understanding, and new objects of emotion to our passions. The whole process of education is indeed a continued synthesis; but it is a synthesis founded on previous analysis, and, even when most skilfully conducted, resembles more the operation of an ingenious artist, in his attempt to produce, in the shortest and easiest manner, a known result, than of a philosophic chemist, who forms combinations of bodies, in the confidence of deriving from them a product altogether new. That we shall be able, by any intentional or accidental union of circumstan-

ces, to produce phenomena of mind, *generically* different from those which the mind has yet exhibited, it is scarcely reasonable to hope; though of species already known we may multiply instances indefinitely. The application of new substances to our organs of sense may excite in us new sensations, and these will of course be productive of new remembrances, new desires, and new comparisons. Every original thought, whatever be its subject, is itself a new phenomenon; and even ideas, which have been long familiar to us, may be variously and beautifully combined by the imagination, in almost inexhaustible series of assemblages. Yet these, it must be confessed, are only new phenomena of species already known to us, and give us no reason to hope, that we shall become acquainted with classes of phenomena, so little similar to the past, as not to be referable to any of those, which we have comprehended under the general names



of *sensation, memory, imagination, judgment,* and the various other terms of thought or emotion, in the nomenclature of mind.

It is not by synthetic experiment, therefore, that we can expect our knowledge of mind to be\* greatly improved; but we are not on that account to suppose that it is not improvable: for we might, with equal reason, assert the impossibility of the Newtonian system of astronomy, because it was not in the power of its

\* Though direct experiment is undoubtedly of much less importance in the physics of mind, than the analysis, and even than the generalization, of those phenomena which spontaneously arise, it must not be considered, even in that science, as an instrument of little value. In the department of it which is included in medical pathology, and in the mental excitement and depression produced by certain classes of medicines, many subjects of very interesting experiment present themselves. Even on phenomena, which seem to be more simple and constant, much light may thus be thrown. The want of musical ear, for instance, which at present appears so very singular an anomaly, may perhaps be reduced to some familiar general law, by experiments which have not yet occurred to inquirers in physiology.

great discoverer, to disarrange the planets at his will, and subject their motions to experiment. Experiment is indeed valuable, not as furnishing us with results, which are in any essential circumstance different from those of observation, but only as increasing, in cases in which we chiefly desire them, the number of observations. The difference is not in the actual change, but in the power which produces the change ; and the definitions of each therefore admit of mutual conversion. We may say of any new *experiment*, that it is an *observation* of those phenomena, which nature presents to us at our desire, and of any new *observation*, that it is the witnessing of an *experiment*, which nature herself has instituted and performs before us. But if from experiment, or from reasoning on experiment, we derive an accession to our knowledge, it is surely of no consequence, whether the experiment have been performed by ourselves

or by others. In the case of mind, indeed, it is urged, that the functions must be known to us, because they are exercised by us, and are exercised equally well, though we may never have reflected on their nature ; as if our exercise of a function was, of itself, a sufficient proof of our knowledge of all the circumstances which combine in it. The most minute acquaintance with the laws of our corporeal physiology does not enable us to invent a single vital function, or to perform the ordinary functions in any respect better, than they are exercised by the rudest of our race ; yet, even though it had no relation to the cure of disease, physiology would be a science of much interest and instruction. It is surely then by a very singular prejudice, that *the physiology of mind* has been sometimes represented, as a science which can teach us nothing, from the mere circumstance, that the same functions of mind are exercised by the ignorant and the

learned. All philosophy is not confined to the operations of synthesis ; and of analysis, there is in the complicated phenomena of mind an almost inexhaustible source, which, in many cases, furnishes results as wonderful, as any of those, which the furnace and the prism have exhibited. In the mind of man, all is aggregation. To remember, to compare, to fear, to hope, all imply more than the simple original idea which is their subject ; and often to form a single judgment, or a single passion, innumerable circumstances have concurred. It is in the power of analysis to retrace those circumstances ; and, though we cannot decompose the compound, and exhibit it in definite parts, we can state the order of combination, and discover, in some of the leading circumstances, analogies which connect the \* aggregate with other compound

\* It is not meant to be asserted, that any conception or passion of the mind is the union of a number of ideas or desires, which have actual separate existence. The most complex of our feelings is still, we have every

feelings. That, by a process of this kind, we perform in mind an office similar, in effect, to that of the chemist in external matter, is scarcely perceived by us ; because the frequent use of material solvents, with the vivid and well marked changes which they present to our organs of sense, tends to induce the belief, that, where such solvents are not employed, there is no analysis : but reason is itself the instrument of analysis in mind. To require, that

reason to believe, but one affection. I consider *ten* as a *compound*, rather as being preceded by certain others, as consisting of them. But, in such cases, we are led by the very constitution of our nature, to consider the affection as *equivalent* to certain others, in the same manner as if it actually involved them. It is on this tendency that the mathematical sciences are wholly founded. Though our idea of *ten* is as much one affection of mind, as our idea of *one*, we consider it as involving many of the other ; and we perfectly understand what it meant, when we are told that *one* is a fraction of *ten*. It is in this sense only, as a feeling of equivalence, rather than a perception of number, that I speak of the *analytic* power of the mind. But to the mind, which feels that relation of equivalence, it is precisely the same thing, as the perception and separation of actual number.

it should decompose its compounds, and exhibit them in parts to the eye, or to any other organ of external sense, is an absurd demand ; for the process is wholly internal, and has regard, not to actual number, but only to those relations of our ideas, of which we are conscious, and which exist only in our consciousness. The subject and the instrument, it is confessed, are different ; but in every other respect, the parallel is complete. We analyse our thoughts, by reflection, as we analyse matter, by the use of other matter. The mere functions, indeed, as the powers of *memory* and *comparison*, we do not attempt thus to simplify, but only the ideas *remembered* and *compared*: for the functions themselves are in truth nothing more than the names of certain general circumstances of resemblance, in classes of the phenomena of mind, like the general circumstances of resemblance, in the material world, to which we give the name of laws of

action ; and we never attempt to analyse corpuscular *attraction* or *repulsion*, but only to separate the heterogeneous particles, which are *attracted* or *repelled*. It is some general function, however, that most readily occurs to us, when we think of mind ; and, as all men know equally well that they remember and compare, a superficial thinker may thus be led to conceive, that all men know equally well the complex intellectual phenomena included in those functions. An error of this kind could not have arisen, had any of the more complex phenomena of mind been originally taken into consideration. The feelings of *taste* and of *moral approbation*, for instance, exist in all ; but how few are conscious of the many ideas and emotions, associated perhaps at very distant times, which mingle in the feelings. In the same manner, every one perceives rocks and flowers, and the various other bodies on the surface of the earth, though he may be wholly incapable of

distinguishing their elemental constituents. The separation of these elements is confessedly an operation of ingenious labour ; but it requires a process of analysis, at least as refined, to fix the theories of taste and of moral approbation : and the only difference in these last cases,—a difference which certainly should not diminish our admiration,—is, that the process is performed, without any visible and complicated apparatus. To say, that all the materials of the process exist, and have always existed, in our consciousness, is no more than to say, that the materials of combustion, the theory of which has only of late been opened to us, exist, and have always existed, in our common fires. The very same materials were used, for the daily purposes of life, long before philosophers had inferred the laws of their combination : nor was it from discoveries made by the addition of any new substance, that the modern theory of combustion arose, but only from at-



attention paid to circumstances, which, though before disregarded, had been always open to our observation, and from the just neglect of circumstances, which had been imagined without proof. There is surely, therefore, nothing absurd in the supposition, that, by attention to circumstances before unregarded, and perhaps too by the omission of some hypotheses which at present may have been too easily admitted, we may discover new analogies and relations of thought.

The various prejudices, to which even the most philosophic mind is subject, are themselves a sufficient proof, that man, though conscious of every aggregate conception, as one existing compound, is not conscious of all its elemental parts. It is often a single idea in the compound, the presence of which is wholly unsuspected by us, that decides the feeling of approbation or disapprobation, of truth or of falsehood,

with which the compound is viewed ; and the opinion would, in such cases, be altogether reversed, if the presence of the extraneous idea could be made sufficiently apparent. The ideas, comprehended in the word *government*, are perhaps not the same in any two individuals ; and still more probable is it, that not a single individual is able to analyse to himself, with accuracy, his own very general conception. He is, however, a good or a bad citizen, independently of that analysis, and merely as the greater number of images, of oppression, or of security and peace, prevail in the compound, so as to excite the feeling of respect or of disaffection. Even *liberty* itself, that truly British name, has often become a term of unjust suspicion, even to men who have been disinterested and virtuous, and desirous of the happiness of their race, in those unfortunate times, when the name, which they would otherwise have revered, has been profaned, by the turbulence

of faction, and associated with any recent and therefore lively images of the horrors of revolutionary licentiousness. To make all men conscious of the elemental parts of their various conceptions and belief, would be, in truth, to destroy the empire of prejudice over the human understanding.

THE feeling of astonishment may be always considered, as a proof of the discovery of some striking circumstance before unknown. The mere learning of a new name, where no idea is acquired with it, never produces astonishment; and therefore, if the philosophy of mind were only the invention of names, for ideas already conceived and understood in all their relations, its most refined disquisitions would be received by us without emotion. We are not surprised, when we hear, for the first time, that *judgment* is a *substantive* and *to judge* a *verb*, that *animus* is the Latin synonyme of

*mind*, and *memoire* the French of *memory* ; and though the citizen, in Moliere's comedy, was astonished to find, that he had spoken *prose* all his life without knowing it, his astonishment did not arise from the mere name, but from the discovery, that a word, which he had formerly considered as expressive of some mysterious excellence of language, had so very simple a meaning. We are astonished, when we learn, that a part of the tasteless air which we breathe is the source of acidity ; but, having learned that property, we feel no prolongation of our astonishment, in being told, that the name *oxygene* is given to that portion of the atmosphere. It is sufficient, therefore, for the present argument, that surprise is excited in us by the results of analytical inquiry in mind, and excited in many cases as strongly, as by those discoveries in chemical analysis, which are universally allowed to add to our knowledge. The vulgar would gaze with astonish-

ment, were they to perceive an electrician inflame gunpowder with an icicle ; but they would not be less confounded by those dazzling subtleties, with which metaphysicians would persuade them, that the very actions, which they feel to be benevolent and disinterested, had their source in the same principle of selfishness, which makes man a knave or a tyrant. Whether that particular doctrine be true or false, is of no consequence : the whole theory of our moral sentiments presents results, which are nearly as wonderful ; and indeed the falseness of any particular doctrine is itself one of the strongest arguments that can be urged : for, if all men had equal knowledge of the phenomena of their mind, no one could advance an opinion on the subject, with real belief of it, which another could discover to be erroneous. In the different stages of the growth of a passion, what a variety of appearances does it assume ; and how difficult is it often to trace, in

the confusion and complication of the paroxysm, those calm and simple emotions, in which, in many cases, it originated ! A very small number of circumstances, which have perhaps nothing in themselves that seems capable of any great influence, and which would probably have been slightly felt, and have passed away in indifference, if they had occurred to others, are often sufficient to determine to vice, or virtue, that which is as yet nothing more, than an obscure and indefinite desire of something unpossessed. The love of domestic praise, and of the parental smile of approbation, which gave excellence to the first efforts of the child, may expand, with little variation, into the love of honest and honourable fame, or, in more unhappy circumstances, may shoot out, from its natural direction, into all the guilt and madness of atrocious ambition. In many cases, the self-deception is even greater, than the mistakes of unphilosophic observers. That

which is a contradiction in language, and even in thought, has been verified in the extravagance of human passion. It can love and hate, at the same moment, and even love most intensely, when it is conscious of nothing but of malignant resentment. The very fury of jealousy is often nothing more, than the ardour of affection, united with some trifling circumstances, of dread, and suspicion, and mortified vanity ; but the compound emotion bears little resemblance to that which is its great constituent. How different is the passion of the miser, as viewed by himself, by the vulgar, and by the philosophers ! He is conscious himself only of the accuracy of his reasonings on the probabilities of future poverty, of a love of economy and of temperance, and perhaps too of justice. To common observers he is only a lover of money. They content themselves with the passion in its mature state ; and it would not be easy to convince them, that the most self-

denying avarice involves as its essence, or at least originally involved, the love of those very pleasures and accommodations, which are now sacrificed to it without the least apparent reluctance.

The theory of taste is at least as complicated as that of the passions. The feeling of beauty, so various and yet so immediate, is common to us with all men; but philosophers are still contending, as to the circumstances which combine in producing it, while to the vulgar it seems as much an absolute quality of objects, as their colour, or even their stature and form. The great national differences of taste, as exemplifying the power of the associating principle in producing them, strike upon our conviction, with irresistible force; but even within the same range of mountains, the same little district, the same family, the variety is sufficiently conspicuous. To comprehend fully the



pleasure, which results from any one work of art, or scene of nature, it would perhaps be necessary, that the whole series of sensations and emotions in the individual, from the first enjoyments of his infancy, should be laid open to our discrimination. There is, in the permanent and unbounded loveliness of nature, something which strikes us, as too great and sublime, to have sprung from our own little thoughts, and fugitive enjoyments. When we first learn to consider these as its source, we have, in a greater degree, that half-incredulous astonishment, which must have been experienced by those, who, having cast their eyes for the first time on a temple of ancient Greece, and feeling a sentiment of more than earthly awe, as if it were the dwelling of the Thunderer himself, found, on entering, that the God who inhabited it, though imaged by Praxiteles, was still only a frail and finite form, the resemblance of their own imperfect humanity.

If the knowledge of the mental phenomena were in all men of the same kind, the only difference in individuals would be in the number of their ideas ; and there could be no difference, in that discernment of the relations of ideas, in which we suppose sagacity, and invention, and all the higher powers of the mind to consist : for, if we admit, that one man may discern better than another the relations of those ideas which both equally possess, we must admit, that one man may discern innumerable relations, which others have not perceived, and therefore, that the science of mind, which is the science of those relations, is capable of a degree of improvement, to which we cannot fix any bound. Even in phenomena, which seem so simple, as scarcely to have admitted combination, what wonders have been developed by scientific inquiry ! Perception itself, that primary function of the mind, which was surely the same before Berkeley examined the laws of vision as

at present, is now regarded by us very differently, in relation to the most important of its organs; and it would not be easy to find, amid all the brilliant discoveries of modern chemistry, and even in the whole range of the physics of matter, a proposition more completely revolting to popular belief, than that which it is now easy to demonstrate, that the sense of sight, which seems to bring the farthest hills of the most extended landscape, and the very boundlessness of space, before our view, is, of itself, utterly incapable of shewing us a single line of longitudinal distance.

~~X~~To attempt to enumerate the various intellectual phenomena, which are capable of analysis, would be a waste of labour. Even the preceding reasoning may perhaps have appeared unnecessarily minute: and my only apology for its tediousness is my anxiety, that the science of mind, to the future progress of which I cannot

look with indifference,—as the progress of that which is perhaps better fitted than any other science, to give a general elevation to our faculties and pursuits, and a steadiness and precision to those amiable propensities of our nature, which, without the knowledge of their important end, might pass away in false, and short, and frivolous benevolence,—should be rescued from the influence of a prejudice, which, if unfortunately received, would quench all ardour of intellectual investigation. The opinion, which asserts the real knowledge of the phenomena of mind to be alike and uniform in all, has indeed so little semblance of truth, that even a single argument in confutation of it may be thought superfluous; and, if all have not the same knowledge of the phenomena, the science of mind is evidently an improvable science, and may continue to receive light from further inquiry, in the same manner as it has already received light from inquiries which are past.

The analysis of our belief of cause and effect, which, in conformity with this principle, is attempted in the following essay, will, it is hoped, throw some additional light on that very important theory. The question is not in this, as in many other speculations, one which terminates in itself, but is connected with every other inquiry, in the physics both of matter and of mind. From a single misconception, on this subject, arose all those hypotheses and abstractions, which wasted, for so many ages, the labour of ingenious men, in rendering physics either a jargon of unintelligible sounds, or the romance of an ideal world. It is no small part of science, to be well acquainted with its boundaries of inquiry. As long as any mysterious connection is supposed between phenomena, the mind of man must, from its very nature, be curious to investigate that mysterious tie ; nor will the simple assurance, that the discovery is impossible, be suf-

ficient to destroy the curiosity, and thus to prevent the investigation that seeks to gratify it. It is of much consequence to know, that the invariableness of antecedence and consequence, which is represented as only the sign of causation, is itself the only essential circumstance of causation, that we are not merely ignorant of any thing third and intermediate, but have in truth no reason to suppose it as really existing, and that this simple theory, instead of being in opposition to the sublime doctrines of religion, is equally favourable to them as the more mysterious theory, or rather tends to make the great doctrines of religion more intelligible and sublime, by simplifying the analogies of human order and volition, and by destroying that supposed circumstance between the will of Deity and the creation of the world, which, if it be not greater than the creating will, at least seems to divide with it the grandeur and the glory of the magnificent effect.

OBSERVATIONS  
ON  
CAUSE AND EFFECT.

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THAT Mr. Hume was an acute *thinker* in metaphysics, there are probably none, even of his most daring antagonists, who will venture to deny. That he was also a perspicuous metaphysical *writer*, has been generally admitted; but it has been admitted, chiefly as a consequence of the former praise, or from the remembrance of that power of style, which, in other respects, he unquestionably possessed. In his shorter details of historical reasoning, no defect is perceived; because these afford room for the display of acute conjecture, and of a happy combination of those loose circumstances, which to common observers appear altogether unconnected, rather than for regular consecu-

tive demonstration. But, as a metaphysical writer, Mr. Hume is in no degree supereminent in those qualities, which the *developement* of an abstruse and complicated science peculiarly requires. He seizes a first principle, indeed, with singular rapidity ; but, to us, he rather exhibits it gracefully at different distances, than brings it regularly and directly to the best point of vision : and though, in the *separate views* which he gives us of a subject, we are always struck with the acuteness of his discernment, and are often charmed with an ease of language and a pointedness of remark, which, without the levity of humour, have all its playful graces, still, when we consider him as the expositor of a theory, we are sensible of a want of strict methodical arrangement, for which subtlety of thought, and grace of composition, are not able fully to atone. We almost discover, that his mind had not been conversant with the close and continuous investigations of mathematical science ; and we feel, that it is the genius of his style, to illustrate, rather than to *establish*.



THE want of strictness of method may perhaps also be traced in part to those habits of refined scepticism, in which it seems to have been the early and lasting passion of Mr. Hume's mind to indulge. It was more in the detection of fallacies in the common systems of belief, than in the discovery of truths which might be added to them, that he loved to exercise his metaphysical ingenuity; or, rather, the detection of fallacies was that species of discovery of truth, in which he chiefly delighted. It is by the love of display, however, which usually accompanies this unlimited and daring curiosity, not by the curiosity itself, that the intellectual character is vitiated. There is a calm and silent scepticism of an inquisitive spirit, which has nothing in it that is unfavourable, either to closeness of reasoning in the discovery of truth, or to exactness of theoretical arrangement, in the communication of it to others. Such a spirit is even so essential to all inquiry, that the absence of it in any one may be considered as a sufficient proof, that he has not the genius of a metaphysician: for

the science of metaphysics is a science of analysis ; and we carry on our analysis, only when we suspect that we have not yet obtained a simple element. It is not, therefore, from such doubts as have only further inquiry in view, that any important evil can arise : but there is a very great difference between the scepticism, which seeks first principles only to know where inquiry must terminate, and that which seeks them, only to discover and proclaim their apparent inconsistencies. Astonishment indeed is thus produced ; and, it must be confessed, that there is a sort of triumphant delight in the production of astonishment, which it is not easy to resist, especially in that\* early period of life, when the love of fame is little more than the love of present wonder and admiration. But he who indulges in the pleasure, and seeks, with an idle vanity of acuteness, to dazzle, rather than to enlighten, will find, that though he may have improved his subtlety, by

\* We are told by Mr. Hume, that his *Treatise on Human Nature* was projected by him before he had left college.

exercises of nice and unprofitable discernment, he has improved it at the expence of those powers of patient investigation, which give to subtlety its chief value. The perpetual consideration of the insufficiency of all inquiry, as deduced from inconsistencies which may seem to be involved in some of our principles of belief, is more encouraging to indolence than to perseverance; and though, from the principle of curiosity, which, in our mental constitution, has almost the force of an animal appetite, it may not be able to preclude the intellectual exercise of our faculties, it will tend to seduce them into a luxurious slothfulness of occupation, which prefers short and brilliant novelties, to truths of permanent utility, but of more laborious research. To shew, that it is not from any logical inference, or direct induction, that we have derived many of those opinions, which, by the very constitution of our nature, it is impossible for us not to hold, requires indeed a perspicacity and quickness of glance, but does not require any process of long continued reasoning. The very

habit of ratiocination is thus apt to yield to a subtlety, which is almost refined into point and antithesis : and this tendency, strong as it naturally is, is still increased by the popular odium attached to infidelity, in the great articles of general belief, which induces the necessity, in many cases, of exhibiting subjects only by glimpses, and of hinting, rather than enforcing a proof. A mind, that has been long habituated to this rapid and lively species of remark, does not readily submit to the regularity of slow disquisition. It is evidently better fitted, for grasping a single principle, than for unfolding a theory ; and we term it immediately acute, or subtle, or ingenious : but we have some hesitation, in ascribing to it that peculiar quality of intellect, which sees through a long train of thought a distant conclusion, and separating at every stage the essential from the accessory circumstances, and gathering and combining analogies as it proceeds, arrives at length at a system of harmonious truth. It is a quality to which acuteness is necessary, but which is not itself necessarily im-

plied in acuteness ; or rather it is a combination of qualities, for which we have not yet an exact name, but which forms a peculiar character of genius, and is in truth the very spirit of all philosophic investigation.

WHATEVER may have been the source of the very manifest imperfection of arrangement in the theoretical part of Mr. Hume's metaphysics, there is no portion of his works to which the objection is more applicable, than to the essays on causation. The general doctrine, all the parts of which might apparently have been stated with greater effect in a single essay, is obscured and perplexed, by the irregular and dilatory mode in which it is presented to us. The train of propositions is broken incessantly, by a repetition of the same ' sceptical doubts ;' and, even when the whole doctrine has been presented to us, the whole doctrine is formally delivered to us again, in another long essay ' on the idea of necessary connexion,' which differs in little more than in title, from those which preceded it. From

this confusion it has happened, that a theory, which is in part indubitably true, and in part indubitably false, has been either adopted altogether, or rejected altogether, without any discrimination of its errors and its excellence. It will, therefore, be expedient, in our examination of it, to attempt to remedy this deficiency, by arranging it into a series of propositions, and considering each of these in its regular order.

*A cause may be defined the object, or event,\**

\* The word *event* might, in strictness of language, be omitted, and is retained only in compliance with a popular distinction : for an event is nothing more than the sudden existence of an object in those particular circumstances *in which alone* it precedes some other object. When it precedes it, in all circumstances, even the vulgar think only of *the object itself*, in their reference of causation. Thus, as the sun is never visible without an increase of heat, they have no hesitation in saying, that *the sun* is a cause of heat. But, when it is only in certain circumstances that one object precedes another, we almost lose sight of the object itself, and transfer the causation to some *term*, expressive merely of that change of circumstances, by which the object begins to exist in its particular state of antecedence. It is *the explosion* of gunpowder,

*which immediately precedes any change, and which, existing again in similar circumstances,*

gun-powder, not the mere existence of the gaseous product in its state of high elasticity, that we assign, in common language, as the cause of the violent concussion, to which the elasticity gives rise. To consider *an event*, rather than *an object*, as the cause of any change, is, however, only to go back an additional step in our reference, and to ascribe the effect, not to those circumstances immediately preceding it, which, in scholastic language, are termed *the proximate cause*, but to the circumstances immediately preceding that proximate cause.

To the universal *priority* of causes, there is, in name at least, one apparent exception, in the mode of considering the phenomena of the world, in relation to the supposed will of the Supreme Being; as the term is then assigned, not to the prior, but to the subsequent, event. The *final cause* of any thing is the good which *follows* it. Thus, as adversity rouses and exercises the heroic qualities of mind in the sufferer, and the benevolent qualities in those who are witnesses of his suffering, a philosophic optimist considers the production and strengthening of those virtues, as the final cause of every physical evil. But it is evident, that, even in this application of the term, the real implied cause is prior; and it is only from a double metonymy, that it appears to be subsequent. The two events observed by us are, in the expression, placed for those circumstances, which we suppose to have preceded them in the divine mind; and we mean only, that *the consideration* of that virtue, which adversity would

*will be always immediately followed by a similar change.* Priority in the sequence observed, and invariableness of antecedence in the future sequences supposed, are the elements which constitute the idea of a cause. By a conversion of terms, we obtain a definition of the correlative *effect*.\*

would tend to produce, was the cause of that divine *volition*, by which adversity exists. It is in relation to the Deity alone, that the phrase is at all intelligible; and, in relation to his design, that good, which we term the final cause, and not the instrumental evil, which, to our observation appears to precede it, was in truth the prior circumstance.

\* ‘ Similar objects,’ says Mr Hume, ‘ are always  
 ‘ conjoined with similar. Of this we have experience.  
 ‘ Suitably to this experience, therefore, we may define a  
 ‘ cause to be *an object, followed by another, and where all the*  
 ‘ *objects, similar to the first, are followed by objects similar to*  
 ‘ *the second. Or, in other words, where, if the first object had*  
 ‘ *not been, the second never had existed.*’ This last circumstance, if very rigidly examined, is not admissible into a just definition of a cause; as it excludes the possible agency of co-existing objects, which separately might have been able to produce the existence or appearance of the second object. With the possibility, in many cases, of such co-existence, even our present very-limited knowledge of the phenomena of nature, has made us sufficiently



It may be stated as the first proposition of Mr. Hume's theory, that *the relation of cause and effect cannot be discovered a priori*. In every case, the second phenomenon must have been previously witnessed: for there is nothing in the first appearance of any object, which can lead us to predict the appearance of a particular object, rather than of any other, as immediately successive. Were this anticipation possible, all men would be equally philosophers, and all would be philosophers at birth. A lucky chance converted the magnet into something more than an ugly stone. It

ly acquainted. A hand, for example, may hold a piece of iron, and may approach a loadstone with it, in exactly the same direction, and with exactly the same velocity, as that with which the iron, if free, would itself have approached it. In this case, 't is evident, that, whether we regard the motion as produced by the hand, or by the loadstone, *the first object might not have been, and yet the second might have existed*. The addition or omission of this circumstance, is, however, of no essential consequence to the theory of causation, which depends only on the invariableness of the sequence; and I have, therefore, ventured to omit it, in the definition which I have given.

is by experience alone we know, that a spark, like that which falls and is extinguished on a heap of sand, will raise a heap of gunpowder into an irresistible conflagration. It is by experience alone we know, that the sight of wretchedness will cause in one bosom no emotion, while it melts another into pity, that almost equals in sorrow the grief which it deplores. Without that experience, we might with equal reason have imagined, that the spark would have been extinguished on the gunpowder, and that pain, unfelt by ourselves, would in us have excited no emotion.

OF the truth of this first proposition, instances may be given, as numerous and various as the phenomena of nature. The preceding are taken from mind, as well as from matter, to shew, as far as actual knowledge is concerned, the exact similarity of both cases. In the latter case, indeed, we may often seem to have, *a priori*, a knowledge of succeeding events ; as motions are made in apparent adaptation to circumstances that are about to follow, before

the existence of those circumstances can have been learned from experience. By what complicated muscular action is the first food of life acquired ! Yet we have no reason to imagine, that an infant, who is for the first time applied to his mother's breast, has any idea of the milky stream that is to flow, when he forms his little vacuum for its reception. The necessary motions are the result of an instinct, unerring, because it is not left to the capricious accidents of human knowledge, and provident and perfect, because it is arranged by the highest wisdom. Wherever *knowledge* is concerned, however, it follows the same laws, whether in matter or in mind. That the desire of moving his arm will be followed by its motion, is not known to the swaddled babe, and is believed by the impotent paralytic. The pleasure which the contemplation of works of intellectual excellence inspires, has never entered into the imagination of the illiterate. The passions of love, ambition, avarice, are *felt* by the lover, the hero, the miser ; by others their nature is *learned* from description, in the same

manner as we acquire our knowledge of the serpents and tigers of the East. We think, indeed, that the phenomena of mind are less dependent on experience, than those of matter, because the greater number of emotions, and even of passions, are, in some degree, known to us so early, that we have forgotten the time when the experience was acquired ; while the external world presents to us a never-ending series of new objects, and at once, by their permanence, keeps our memory alive, and impresses on it the difficulty of discovery, by the complicated apparatus which it obliges us to use. Yet, uniform as the mental phenomena in most circumstances must be, how different, even as to many of these, would be the predictions of individuals of different ages and countries ! No Roman would have scrupled to foretel, that the combat of gladiators, which was to be exhibited on the morrow, would be witnessed with delight, by the most gentle and delicate of the virgins of Rome. To a Briton, unacquainted with that mixture of barbarism and civilization, such an assertion would seem

not less absurd, than if it had predicted a change in the well-known order of material phenomena. What is called knowledge of the world, is knowledge of the human mind; and, when the address, and nice discrimination, of one who has spent a long life in scenes of business, are contrasted with the artlessness of a child, or even with the simplicity of a retired philosopher, it is impossible for us not to feel, that, like all other knowledge, that of our intellectual and moral frame is dependent on experience.

So different, however, has the nature of succession been considered, in the phenomena of mind and of matter, that on this difference has been founded a theory of power, which has met with very general acceptance. It has been asserted, that from mind alone we derive our idea of power; and that the idea, acquired by the consciousness of our own exertion, is *transferred* to the apparent changes of external matter. But, *unless we suppose the idea of power to have been otherwise acquired*, what we call

*exertion*, is nothing more than the sequence of muscular motion to desire, as magnetism is the sequence of the motion of iron to the approach of a loadstone. We have, in each case, *two* phenomena, but we have no more ; and we as little ascribe *desire* to the loadstone, as we suppose the approach of a loadstone to have preceded our muscular motion. If we say that we ascribe, not *desire*, but *power*, to the loadstone, we beg the question : for power, which has a relation to future cases, as well as to the present, is something more than the mere sequence of desire and motion, which is all that took place in exertion ; and, if from one sequence any inference may be made, as to the *recurrence* of sequences, it may be made as much from the motion of iron, as from the motion of a limb. If what we feel be transferred, it is evidently *desire* which we feel. Till the muscular motion has taken place, it is desire alone ; or, if we suppose, that, even before the first exertion, there is an instinctive expectation of the result, it is only desire, combined with belief, that the motion will follow ;

it is afterwards desire, combined with the knowledge that a muscular motion has been its consequence, and with belief that it will again be followed by the motion : but neither is the combination of belief and desire *transferred* to the loadstone, nor, after magnetism has been observed, is there less knowledge of *it* too, as a past event, nor less expectation of it as a future consequence. In both cases, indeed, as will afterwards appear, the inference, as to future similarity of event, is made from one general principle : but it is a principle common to all sequences, and which, we have every reason to believe, would operate in the same manner, though man were wholly incapable of muscular exertion.

It is, perhaps, even too much authority, which Mr. Hume gives to this error, when he allows, that the *animal nîsus*, which we experience, enters very much into the vulgar idea of power. It is more probable, that the feeling of this animal nîsus, though derived from cases in which the exertion has eventual-

ly succeeded, enters largely into the vulgar idea of restraint, or want of power. But, that the great and general error should have been adopted by philosophers, is peculiarly unaccountable ; as it is impossible to attend to the common language of the science of mind, without perceiving its innumerable derivations from the analogies of matter. The phenomena of mind succeed each other in a certain order ; the phenomena of matter also have their peculiar order : but, were we to judge, by the language of each, from which of the two sequences our idea of power is derived, the probability would seem on the side of the latter. It is only in poetry, that wishes and volitions are given to inanimate objects, while, even in common conversation, we never speak of the desires and passions of the soul, without a series of metaphors, taken from the objects around us. And, indeed, when we consider, not the language only, but the very thoughts and abstractions, of which theories are made, we discover innumerable attempts to materialize every operation of the mind, but very few



attempts to spiritualize the operations of matter. How much have we heard, of images, and impulses, and traces in the sensorium, of vibrations, and vibratiuncles, of animal spirits, electricity, and galvanism ! There is scarcely a single new generalization of those phenomena of matter which have been long familiar to us, or a single power in matter inferred from the observation of new phenomena, which has not been immediately seized by philosophers, and applied to mind ; as if it were the great business of metaphysical science, to systematize the slight analogies of metaphor, and as if those internal processes, of which we are conscious, could be simplified, by the interposition of additional processes, of which we are not conscious, and which are themselves equally inexplicable, as the phenomena, which they are adduced to explain.

That there is in the nature of man a tendency to animate and personify every object around him, has indeed been sometimes urged, as a proof of the general belief of the immediate agency of

mind, in all the changes of the material world. Planets, it is contended, have had their regent spirits ; and Oreads, Dryads, and Naiads, have formed a part of popular mythology. In such cases of supposed belief, however, there is often nothing but a mere figure of rhetoric, or a gay pomp of worship itself almost rhetorical, which may be considered as little more than a very lively prosopopœia. But, even in those cases of real belief, in which the personification has not arisen from allegory and poetic embellishment, it is easy to trace the source of the supposed agency : for the nymphs of classical superstition, like the fays, and other shadowy beings, of our own local mythology, are usually represented, rather as inhabitants of certain districts, over which they preside, and in which they occasionally appear, when any great part is to be performed, than as connecting and carrying on all the regular and uniform natural processes, which are exhibited to our daily view. It is only where great and unusual phenomena occur, and no visible cause is discerned, that the immediate agency of spirits is supposed. It

is a *dignus vindice nodus*, and a god is therefore introduced, because mind, which is the only power that is itself altogether invisible, furnishes the only *analogy* to which recourse can be had. When sounds, therefore, are heard from the mountain, the grove, or the stream, while around the hearer no blast is stirring; when a voice of many thunders cries aloud, and fire flashes from clouds, which, the very moment before, were one gloomy stilness, it is not wonderful, that the heart and knee of man should fall prostrate, as in the presence of a mighty spirit. But this belief is only the result of an analogical reasoning, which, in a certain stage of physical science, is irresistible, and differs not, in the slightest degree, from a thousand other reasonings of analogy in physics, in which the cause supposed is not spiritual but material. It is confined to certain cases, in which *the analogy of life* is more striking than any other, and is very different from that general theory, which ascribes a supposed living power to the production of every change. The Roman, who heard Jupi-

ter in the sky, and acknowledged that he reigned, saw and recognised an endless succession of material causes, in the more common spontaneous changes of nature, and in the daily arts of life ; and while in the public field of exercise he drove the ball, or watched it, as it fell and rebounded from the earth, he never once imagined, that a god was at all concerned in the operation.

THE most probable source of the error, as relating, not merely to cases of inferred analogy, but to every instance of change in matter, is the continuance of apparent rest in bodies, when not under the influence of a manifest *external* force. The rock, which, many ages ago, was swept from the mountain's side, remains still, in the same spot of the valley which received it, and is scarcely distinguishable from the fragments, which the desolation of yesterday has spread around it : while the locomotive power of animals, as exerted by fits of longer or shorter duration, renders visible to us the beginnings of motion from absolute

rest ; the whole train of vital changes being composed, partly of motions, which are visible, and partly of affections of mind, which are invisible, and the invisible affections being neglected by us, in our consideration of the visible motions, which appear at intervals only, though, in reality, they are parts of one continuous sequence. It has thus been usual, to term matter *inert*, as if capable only of *continuing* changes, and to distinguish mind as alone active, and capable of *beginning* changes. But this assumption of a quality to mind instead of favouring, by a new and striking distinction, the pure doctrine of immaterialism, tends only to furnish its antagonists with a ground of triumph, by permitting them to suppose, that they have shewn a complete similarity of the principles of mind and matter, when they have shewn nothing but the falsehood of one asserted difference. It is enough, to maintain, that *mind* is that which is sentient, and that we have no reason to suppose, that our sensations have any common nature with their unknown external causes, the se-

parate existence of which, however, though undemonstrated, and undemonstrable, we feel it impossible not to believe. But, when we have admitted the existence of *matter*, as the external cause of the sensations of *mind*, we are not justified by induction, in affirming, that any created matter is less capable of beginning changes, than any created mind. All is only a continuance of changes, and often of mutual changes. If, without the intervention of matter, thought arise after thought, and passion after passion, as often, without the intervention of mind, does the motion of a few small particles of matter produce in other masses a long series of elemental motions. If mind often act upon matter, as often does matter act upon mind; and though matter cannot begin a change of itself, when all the preceding circumstances have continued the same, as little, when all the preceding circumstances continue the same, is such a change possible in mind. It does not perceive, without the occurrence of an object to be perceived, nor will, without the suggestion of some object of desire. The truth is,

that certain changes of mind invariably precede certain other changes of mind, and certain changes of matter certain other changes of matter, and also that certain changes of mind invariably precede certain changes of matter, and certain changes of matter invariably precede certain changes of mind. To say, that mind produces *motion* in matter, while matter cannot produce *motion* in mind, is but an abuse of language: for it might, in like manner, be said, that mind is inert, because it cannot produce, in itself, or in other minds, that painful *sensation* of heat, which is immediately produced by the contact of a burning mass; or that many of the most powerful chemical solvents are inert, while another solvent alone is active, because from the use of that one solvent alone a particular product can be derived. The changes, produced by mind in matter, are indeed more obvious to the perception of others, and more directly measurable, than the changes, produced by matter in mind; but it is the simple production of a change, not the nature of the change produced,

which is essential to the argument. Even the apparent rest of matter is action, rather than repose. The *particles* of the quiescent mass are all attracting, and attracted, repelling, and repelled ; and even the smallest indistinguishable element is modifying, by its joint instrumentality, the planetary motions of our system, and is performing a part, which is perhaps essential to the harmony of the whole universe of worlds.

THE distinction which has been made of volitions and desires is another circumstance, which has in part contributed to the mistake. The number of desires, of which the mind is susceptible, are as various, as the objects of good. Of these, however, only a certain number terminate in some direct and immediate motion, and are called *volitions* ; while those, which have no such direct and immediate termination, have the simple denomination of *desires*. Thus we are said to *desire* wealth, and to *will* the motion of our hand ; but, if the motion of our hand had not followed our desire of



moving it, we should then have been said, not to will, but to desire its motion. The distance, or the *immediate attainableness* of the good, is thus the sole difference : but, as the words are at present used, they have served to produce a belief, that of *the same immediate good* there is both a desire and a volition ; that the volition which moves the hand, for example, is something different from the mere desire of moving it, the one particular motion being preceded by two affections of mind, a volition and a desire. Of this double affection, however, we have no consciousness, the desire of moving a limb, in the usual circumstances of health, being always directly followed by its motion, whatever interval of opposition there may have been, in the *motives*, or *desires of more distant good*, which preceded *the desire of the particular muscular motions*, as means of obtaining that distant good. It is indeed only in such desires, as have no direct termination in motion, that the equilibrium and pause of motives is conceivable. The voluptuary may balance his love of pleasure with his love of health, and the ambitious man his love of power with

his love of ease and security, because the desires of pleasure, and of health, and of power, and of ease, may separately exist without any immediate and invariable effect, suggesting occasionally different objects of thought according to the casual associations of ideas : but, in the free and healthy state of the body, to desire the motion of our hand is to move it. The volition which moves a muscle, considered, without reference to the muscle, as an affection of the mind alone, differs not more from the desire of any trifling object of distant enjoyment, than the desire of ease differs from the desire of power ; and the only difference is, that what we call a volition is followed immediately by some affection of our body, and what we call a desire is followed immediately by some other affection of our mind. It is not in any quality of our desires, therefore, but in *that arrangement in the order of nature, by which certain corporeal changes follow certain desires*, that the distinction of volitions and desires is founded ; and the particular volition precedes its particular muscular motion, in no other manner, than any other change, material

or mental precedes the change, which is second to it in the order of sequence. But, though it is thus apparent that our volitions are only short desires, which necessarily are not lasting, because they are immediately followed by the attainment of their object, it is not difficult to trace the circumstances, which have led the vulgar, and even philosophers, to consider the two affections of mind, as essentially distinct. One of the chief circumstances is the confidence, which, in the case of voluntary motion, is combined with the desire. We desire wealth, and do not believe that it will follow : We desire the motion of our hand, and know that the motion will follow. The volition, therefore, is desire *combined with belief of immediate sequence* : yet the belief does not arise from any peculiar circumstance in the desire itself, but merely from the experience of the order of sequence, by which the desire has terminated in the particular motion ; and in the case of sudden palsy, in which no motion follows this compound of desire and belief, the compound itself is exactly the same. The term

*will* is not denied to be a convenient term, for distinguishing those desires, *which have instant termination in the muscular motion that is their object*, from those *which relate to objects not directly and immediately attainable, and therefore not accompanied with the belief of direct and immediate attainment*: but still it must not be forgotten, that the mental part of the sequence, which exists in our consciousness alone, is a desire, that differs not from our other desires, more than those others mutually differ. Another circumstance, which has contributed in a very important degree, to the mistake, is the universal habit of confounding the desire which immediately precedes muscular motion, with those other desires, by which it may have been itself preceded, and of considering the will in the process of comparison, as *co-existing* with the opposite desires, not simply as that desire, which *follows* the perception and belief of the greater good. We are hence often said inaccurately, to will in opposition to our desire, as if in the process there were only two affections of mind, a desire and

a volition, so essentially different in their nature, that the will was the choice of what was not desirable. Thus, if any one be compelled to support a weight in his outstretched arm, under fear of a more painful punishment if he should draw it back, he will soon experience a degree of fatigue that is almost insupportable ; and, if he continue to keep his arm extended, he will be said, in the common language of philosophers, to *will* the very pain, which he cannot be supposed to *desire*. But the *direct object of his desire* is not the motion of his arm ; it is simply relief from pain : and the *direct object of his continued will* is not the continuance of pain, but simply the extension of his arm. He *knows* indeed that relief from pain will be immediately procured, by drawing back his arm ; but he knows also, that a severer punishment will follow that motion : and therefore, preferring the less pain to the greater, he *directly* desires or wills the continued extension of his arm. If the *direct object* of his desire were not relief from pain, but actual muscular motion of his arm, there

can be no doubt, that the motion of his arm would immediately ensue. The error of philosophers thus evidently consists, in not distinguishing, with sufficient accuracy, the separate sequences of events, in a complicated process. ‘ With regard to our own actions,’—says Dr. Reid,—‘ we may desire what we do not will, and will what we do not desire ; nay, what we have a great aversion to. A man athirst has a strong desire to drink, but, for some particular reason, he determines not to gratify his desire. A judge, from a regard to justice, and to the duty of his office, dooms a criminal to die, while, from humanity or particular affection, he desires that he should live. A man for health may take a nauseous draught, for which he has no desire but a great aversion. Desire therefore, even when its object is some action of our own, is only an incitement to will, but it is not volition. The determination of the mind may be not to do what we desire to do.’ In all these instances adduced by Dr. Reid, his mistake consists in neglecting or forgetting that part of the pro-

cess, in which there is a real opposition of desires, and supposing an opposition, in another part of the process, in which there really is none : for, in not one of the instances, is there the smallest opposition in that particular desire, which must, according to his own system, be denominated by him *the will*. The determination of the mind never is, and never can be, to *do* what we do not desire to do. When we take a nauseous draught, there is a dislike, indeed, of the sensation which follows the motion, but there is no dislike of *the motion itself, which alone depends upon our will*, and which is desired by us, not from any *love* of the *disagreeable* sensation which follows it, for that would be an absurd contradiction of terms, but from our greater dislike of that continuance of bad health, which we suppose to be the probable consequence of omitting the motion. The desire of moving the hand and the muscles of deglutition is a desire, as much separate and different from the dislike of bad health, as from the dislike of the draught. It is a new desire, arising from the belief of less

evil, in one of two unavoidable evils. In like manner, a judge, who condemns a criminal to death, when, if he yielded to his humanity alone, he would spare him, does not will a single *action*, which he is not desirous of performing, whatever opposition there may have been in those desires, of which his will is not a part, but only the consequence. He has a desire of saving from death an unfortunate individual ; he has a desire of the public good, and of acting in a manner worthy of his high station : both these desires exist previously to those that are termed his volitions, by which alone he dooms the criminal to death ; the volitions arising only from the belief of a greater good, in the same manner, as the desire of fame arises from the contemplation of fame, or any other desire from the contemplation of its object. That the will is a desire following another desire, is true : but it has that circumstance in common with many other desires, which are not considered as involving any peculiar determination, the desire of ease perhaps inducing immediately the desire of wealth,



and the desire of fame, the ambition of power. Nor is it of any consequence to the distinction, that those muscular contractions, in which our volitions terminate, are objects of trifling good in themselves, and are desired, only as means of obtaining a more distant but greater good : for this circumstance, also, our volitions have in common with many of our other desires. He is indeed a miser of no vulgar proficiency in avarice, who loves gold for its own sake alone : and, though the love of fame be not that sole and universal passion, which it has been described by the satirist, we may be assured, that at least the greater number of the objects of our apparently selfish and luxurious desires, which have no reference to the happiness of our fellow creatures, and which are sought by us in all the restless business of our lives, and changed and renewed, with an ever-varying desire of elegance and comfort, as if for our own personal enjoyment, are valued by us, not for the little direct enjoyment, which we are to receive from them, but for the means, which they seem to offer, of in-

creasing, at however dear a cost, our estimation in the respect and regard of the society in which we live.

FOR the sake of simplicity and conciseness, I have confined the argument to those manifest and indisputable volitions, which precede muscular motion. I am not ignorant, that what has been termed *the will* is supposed to possess an empire over the affections of the mind, as well as over the subject muscles, and therefore not to terminate uniformly in the production of *motion* : but the same arguments, which are applicable to the motions of muscles, are applicable also to those supposed volitions, which precede certain thoughts. *The will* is in truth only another name for *desire* ; and we are not conscious, in such cases, first of desire, and afterwards of volition, but only of desire more or less permanent and lively. If the will had the power, which it is supposed to exercise, over the course of thought, it must consist, either in causing the existence of an idea, which would not otherwise have arisen,

or in preventing the existence of an idea, which would have arisen, in the order of spontaneous association. To will *directly* the existence of a particular idea is surely to have that idea already present. To will *directly* its non-existence is a contradiction in terms ; as the very will implies the existence of the idea ; and the liveliness of such a desire would tend only to make the idea more lively, or rather would imply its peculiar liveliness. It is admitted, indeed, by many, that we have no such direct influence ; but still they affirm, that we have it in our power, to will ideas *indirectly*, by calling up other ideas, which we know to be connected with them : yet the supposed indirect will is nothing but the existence of desire, attended by the usual ideas of association, or it is another expression of that direct volition of an idea, which is confessed to be impossible. Thus, if I wish to remember a piece of news, which was communicated to me by a friend, I am said to *call up* the ideas which I know to have been associated with it in place and time, the idea of the person, of the spot, of the atti-

tude, of the other circumstances which were the subject of conversation : but to will the existence of any one of those ideas is to will the idea directly ; and, if I can will the idea of the person, or of the spot, without any idea of the person, or of the spot, implied in my volition, I may as readily will at once the unknown idea, which is the object of my search. Indirect volition is, therefore, exactly the same thing, as direct volition ; or rather it is a series of direct volitions, and cannot therefore be adduced, with the view of getting rid of any inconsistencies, which may be implied in the direct volition of a particular idea unknown to us. The true and simple theory of the recollection is to be found in the permanence of the desire, and the natural order of the associated ideas. A desire, which passes away, without the suggestion of any ideas associated with its object, is by every one allowed to be a simple desire ; but, if it be of any considerable duration, during which such associated ideas arise, its name is immediately changed, and it is termed a volition. In the case of recollection

already instanced, I do not *call up* the ideas of the person, the spot, the attitude, and the various circumstances communicated to me : but I have a desire of remembering something which was told me by my friend, at a certain time ; and the spot, the attitude, the circumstances, rise according to the usual order of association. The remembrance of these suggests the idea of something said at the time. If it suggest that particular part of the conversation which is wished, the desire of course ceases with the gratification of it. If it suggest any other part of it, the desire continuing keeps before me the idea of the person and the place, and allows all the ideas naturally associated to arise, till I either remember what I wish, or the wish itself die away, in the hopelessness of gratification, or in the occurrence of new objects. In like manner, we are sometimes said voluntarily to banish disagreeable reflections. To banish them *directly* is evidently impossible : but, knowing that one idea awakes by association another, we may voluntarily take up a book, with the hope of being led by it into a new

order of thoughts, or give ourselves to any occupation, which may induce trains of its own. In all this, there is nothing but the first step, which can be considered as voluntary ; for, when the new train has begun, it has already relieved us, without our will : and that we have that will or desire, which precedes the muscular actions necessary for taking up a book, and fixing our eyes on its pages, is not denied. We are said indeed, also, to *attend* to the book. *Attention* is merely *the lively and permanent desire of those ideas, which we expect to rise immediately*. We are led to believe, that there is a peculiar volition in it, different from the mere desire ; because, when we attend to any particular object, our attention seems to us to *exclude* every foreign idea : but the nonexistence of foreign ideas does not arise from any will attempting to exclude them, which would in truth imply their existence, but from the simple fact, that no foreign ideas are associated with the object of the peculiar desire. That desire of perusing the pages of the book in our hands, which is term-

ed our *attention* to it, is associated with the book itself, more than with any other book, or any other subject of thought ; and it is not wonderful, therefore, that the attention should be uninterrupted, as long as the object of desire is not fully attained. Sometimes, indeed, the ideas, which the pages suggest, awake other ideas, so lively, as to occupy us with the temporary reverie : but our attitude, and still more the sight of the book itself, recal our original desire ; and, in spite of such occasional distractions, we continue to peruse our volume, till the desire of perusing it, which constitutes our attention, be either overcome by some stronger desire, or terminate in the final and complete gratification of our curiosity. The attention of composition is exactly of the same kind. It is only the desire of immediately writing on a certain subject, which, being of course associated with the ideas connected with that subject, more than with any other ideas, that are not connected with the subject, seems to exclude those foreign ideas, merely because it does not suggest them.

When, however, they occasionally occur, the feeling of the posture in which we sit, and the sight of the implements of writing, and of the books and other objects before us, being more vivid than the common ideas of memory, recal us speedily to our original design, and, therefore, to the ideas connected with that design; and we finish our composition, without the intervention of any other phenomena of mind, than the permanent desire of writing on the subject, the occurrence of the usual ideas of association, and that sense of their truth or falsehood, their propriety or impropriety, which depends only on the co-existence of the ideas, and is altogether independent of our desire. It is unnecessary, to carry this examination, through all the supposed instances of voluntary command of thought. The argument would be, in all, exactly of the same kind. A desire which does not pass away, without suggesting ideas of association, and which is accompanied with the belief, or hope, that its object will speedily follow, is all which, in such cases, we shall be able to discover.



THE various circumstances of supposed difference in our desires and volitions, we may therefore conclude, are not such as establish any essential distinction. *The will* is a *desire*, of the same class with our other desires, and is a term of use only to denote the belief of immediate attainment, as combining with desire, a belief, however, which is not involved in the desire itself, but arises from the observed fact, that a certain motion has immediately followed it. The belief of the essential difference of volition has, however, contributed very largely to the false theory of the idea of power, which supposes it to be derived exclusively from the changes produced by the mind: for, as all, of which we are originally conscious in volition, is the mere wish of something future, which is common to all our desires, we believe, that what remains in it, and distinguishes it, must be something very mysterious, and very great, to which it is easy to attach, in a peculiar manner, the name of *connection*, or *force*, or *power*, or any other name, which scholastic philosophers may have devised.

THE idea of power, we may therefore conclude, is not derived from the invariable connection of certain motions with our will, or from any other phenomena of mind, more than from the common phenomena of matter, both which furnish trains of sequences, that differ, only as their own respective sequences differ among themselves. The very feeling of power, or of connection, if it were to arise, as is asserted, from our consciousness of the operations of our mind, would be itself only a new part of a more complicated mental sequence. In neither case can the antecedent alone, without experience, inform us of that which is to follow ; and therefore the first proposition of Mr. Hume's theory must be admitted, that *the relation of cause and effect cannot be discovered a priori.*

THE second proposition of Mr. Hume's theory is, that, *even after experience, the relation of cause and effect cannot be discovered by reason.* Experience can inform us only of the past. But the relation of cause and effect

has reference to *future and invariable* antecedence and sequence, of which no experience can inform us. We believe it, indeed, irresistibly ; and the belief is not denied : it is only the attempt to found the belief on reason which this proposition opposes. He who asserts, that *A will always be followed by B*, asserts *more* than he who asserts, that *A has always been followed by B* ; and it is this addition which forms the very essence of the relation of cause and effect. Neither of the propositions includes the other ; and, as they have no agreement, *reason*, which is the *sense of agreement*, cannot be applied to them. To use the language of logic, there is no major proposition expressed or understood, for there is no middle term ; and the syllogism is therefore imperfect. In the hope of discovering the source of our belief, we may widen our induction ; to the phenomena, which ourselves have witnessed, we may add those which Nature has exhibited, since the creation of the universe : but, however large our induction may be, it cannot be made to comprehend those

changes, which have not yet begun to exist. Till it be shewn, therefore, that the future is involved in the past, we must allow the truth of the second proposition, that, even after experience, the relation of cause and effect cannot be discovered *by reason*.

It has been contended, indeed, by some very eminent philosophers, that, although our knowledge of the greater number of facts in physics be unquestionably derived from experience, so as not to have been acquirable by reasoning *a priori*, there is a very extensive class of facts, which are altogether independent of experience, and of the laws of thought immediately connected with experience, and which are therefore capable of being inferred, before observation, with complete and independent certainty of the result. The inertia of matter, and the phenomena of the composition of forces, and of statics, have been urged, as instances of this kind. In all such cases of supposed belief, it is almost impossible, or at least very difficult, to separate the

subject, from the ideas, which we have acquired by the experience of our whole life. But, admitting that we have, as is asserted, an original and independent belief of the inertia of matter, it is evidently only an instance of that general law of intuition by which we believe, that, all the circumstances of two events being the same, the effect of those circumstances will be the same in both. To conceive the inertia of matter, we must previously have observed its rest, or its motion, and must conceive, that all the circumstances, in which the rest or motion was observed, continue unaltered. If, therefore, it be a law of thought, immediately connected with our experience, that, from similar circumstances, we expect similar circumstances, the belief of the continuance of the same rectilinear motion, or of rest, may be considered as \* originally un-

\* THIS original belief of the inertia of bodies, in the case of *rest*, continues during life, because there are no apparent inconsistencies observed in any subsequent phenomena; but with the other case of inertia all the observed phenomena are *apparently* inconsistent, the velocity of bodies being continually retarded, by friction

avoidable. The belief of any of the phenomena of the composition of forces, it must however be confessed, is not strictly reducible to the same law of thought, as that of the inertia of matter ; since the resulting phenomenon of the composition is more than the mere continuance, or repetition, of any fact before observed : and therefore, if it be in our power, to infer it *a priori*, it must be allowed, to form an exception to the universal necessity of experience in physics. When, having observed motion in the same streight line communicated to a body at rest by a moving body, we consider the possibility of two equal bodies moving with equal velocity, in sides of a parafriction and other resistance, and the rectilinear motion, when above the surface of the earth, being continually changed by the tendency of gravitation. It thus becomes difficult, to separate in our imagination the simple fact, from the phenomena which concur with it ; since it is of the concurring phenomena alone, that we have uniformly had experience : and accordingly we find, that those, who readily assent to the proposition, that a body, at rest, will for ever remain at rest, unless put in motion by some force applied, are very incredulous, when they hear, that it requires an equal application of force, to prevent a body in motion, from retaining its velocity for ever.

tellogram, and meeting at a third body, we are supposed, to be able to infer, *a priori*, the diagonal motion of the third body. But we are not entitled, in this case, to consider any two of the bodies, as existing in exactly the same circumstances, as when the two were observed alone. *Three* bodies, in a certain situation, may have attractions, or repulsions, altogether different from those, which take place in *two*; as, in chemistry, a small increase or diminution of the quantity of oxygene, combined with azote, produces effects, which have no similarity to the past observed action. Sulphuric acid burns animal matter; potash burns animal matter: the two bodies, in combination, do not burn animal matter. In this instance, it may be said, the bodies are not homogeneous. But, in the phenomena of common motion, the homogeneous or heterogeneous nature of the masses is never taken into account: and, *if we had no experience of the general facts of chemistry, and no experience of the composition of forces*, we should as readily infer, from the separate action of sulphuric acid

and of potash, a similarity of action in the compound, as we should infer, from the phenomena of simple impulse, the diagonal motion of a body, impelled at once in different directions. The *same experience*, which informs us that the particles of matter, by changing their place, in certain combinations, receive different properties, informs us, that the solid masses of matter, brought into various combinations, continue to possess the same properties : but still it is experience which thus enables us to form a separate science of chemistry; and, without that experience, we might as readily have inferred a variation in the apparent qualities of the masses, on the introduction of a third mass, as of the particles, on the admixture of new particles. Even homogeneous masses, acting on each other, without decomposition, have their mutual action varied, by a slight difference of place : and, though the difference occur only in very close vicinity, it might have been imagined, before experience, to occur as readily at one distance, as at another, and to consist as much, in the



mere termination of that repulsion, by which impulse is produced, as in the mutual conversions of attraction and repulsion. To the vulgar, all bodies seem to fall, till they come into actual contact with the earth : yet we have every reason to believe, that no such actual contact takes place, and that even two homogeneous bodies, which, at all visible distances, attract each other strongly, produce in each other, by the change of a single invisible line of distance, a tendency to motion, which is altogether opposite. The apparent difference of circumstances is not greater, in such a case, than in the co-existence of three instead of two bodies ; and if tendencies to motion exactly opposite can be produced by a single line of distance, it is surely not more wonderful, *a priori*, that they should be produced by the presence of a new body. Experience, indeed, tells us, that it is in the former case only, not in the latter, that the change of tendency is produced : but still we must confess, that it is experience alone, which gives us this information ; and that, if the change of tendency had

been produced in both cases, the only circumstance, from which the diagonal motion is supposed to be deducible, would have been destroyed. When two bodies meet, at a third, in directions exactly opposite, we are not to consider the state of the third alone, but the whole phenomenon, of which the third is but a part. The presence of a third body may perhaps, in such circumstances, suspend, or variously change the repulsion, which was observed between the two alone. All the bodies may remain at rest, or the two external bodies may return, with various degrees of velocity. To give the name of *the composition of forces*, to such cases, is in truth to beg the question ; as it takes for granted, that the *forces* remain, though the situation of the bodies be different : and yet how much has been founded on this mere verbal assumption ! The real inquiry is, whether we can have absolute certainty, *a priori*, that, in such cases of new combinations of circumstances, *there are any forces, to be composed*. There may no longer be a single *force* in existence. All which our sup-

position can assume with certainty, is, that there is a meeting of bodies, which, in different circumstances of combination, possessed certain forces. But *a meeting of bodies* is a very different thing from the assumed *composition of forces* ; as it still sends us to experience, to determine, whether any forces exist. It is unnecessary to repeat the argument, in its application to the phenomena of equilibrium, which are exactly of the same kind, as the meeting of three or more bodies, considered under the more general doctrine of the composition and opposition of forces. It is indeed evident, that, in all cases of the supposed inference of phenomena *a priori*, whatever those cases may be, the very supposition of inference implies, that the circumstances, in which the bodies are imagined, are new ; and, in new circumstances, we cannot have absolute certainty, that the qualities, before observed in different circumstances, remain unaltered. There is always, however, a tacit supposition, made by those who assert the possibility of such inferences, that the bodies, in the new circum-

stances in which they are imagined, are not to have any qualities, which were not observed in the prior circumstances : but this is surely to assume a license of supposition, beyond that of strict philosophy. That a very slight difference of the circumstances of bodies produces, or, which is to us the same thing, renders apparent to our senses, qualities altogether dissimilar from those with which we were before acquainted, is the very peculiarity of physics, which renders experience essential to just belief ; and, therefore, to take for granted, in our enunciation of a physical doctrine, that bodies in new circumstances are not to have any new qualities, and afterwards to attempt, on the mere assumption, to establish the possibility of inferring, *a priori*, the phenomena, which those bodies would exhibit, in the new circumstances supposed, is a paralogism in physics, as gross, as that opposite error in mathematics, which asserts the actual measurement of the angles of triangles of various kinds, to be necessary to our belief, that the three

angles of any triangle whatever are together equal to two right angles.

It thus appears, that the very false opinion, which asserts the absolute and independent certainty of some physical inferences, derives whatever semblance of probability it may have, from the assumption of the very circumstance, which in physics is the great object of our doubt. There are many situations, in which bodies appear to possess the same qualities; there are many other situations, in which they seem no longer to possess the same qualities, and seem even to possess qualities which are opposite to the past. To discriminate these situations is the work of experience; and, where the circumstances, either of position, or of combination, are new, we are not entitled to infer the permanence of any quality, observed in different positions, or in different combinations. But, though the opinion were not liable to this objection, it would still be liable to that great and fundamental objection, which is common to every case of physical causation.

Though we should admit, that, from the observation of simple impulse we may be led to suppose the diagonal direction of the motion of a third body, impelled by bodies moving in the sides of a pararellogram, we certainly cannot be led to suppose it, with greater assurance, than that, with which we believe a repetition of the rectilinear motion to be produced by a repetition of the simple impulse: and our belief of this *future* rectilinear impulse is not an *inference* from any induction of the past, however frequent our observation of cases exactly similar may have been. Unless, in similar circumstances, the future be exactly similar to the past, there will be neither rectilinear motion, from the impulse of one body, nor diagonal motion, from the impulse of two bodies. To predict any one event, with logical certainty, would be in either case impossible. If the continuance of gravitation, in all the future time before us, be not a necessary truth, it surely cannot be said, of any of the future unobserved phenomena of statics, *which depend on the continuance of gravitation*, that

they are not contingent, but of absolute independent certainty. We might thus infer the certain existence of that, which, for any reason that can be given by us, may never have existence. There is no phenomenon whatever, of which the prediction is not contingent, even after innumerable instances of it, as a past sequence, have been witnessed by us : and, before the sequence has been witnessed by us, the uncertainty cannot in any instance be less, but must, on the contrary, be much greater ; as, even in the cases, in which alone the inference is supposed to be possible, it proceeds on an assumption, which is contradicted by our general physical knowledge, that bodies, in new circumstances of combination, always retain their former properties, and have no additional properties, which can modify their joint action. The cases of imagined inference *a priori*, we may therefore conclude, form no real exception to the proposition of Mr. Hume's theory, which has been considered by us. Experience is in every case necessary to our strict undoubting belief ; and, to repeat the words of

the proposition, *even after experience the relation of cause and effect cannot be discovered by reason.*

THE third proposition of Mr. Hume's theory is, that *the relation of cause and effect is an object of belief alone.* The belief, he acknowledges, is irresistible, but is derived from a principle of our own nature only, and not from the qualities of external things. To this third proposition it is impossible to deny our assent, if we have given it to the preceding two : for, of any quality, which is incapable of being *perceived or inferred*, our belief, however fixed and certain, can result only from that instinctive principle of faith, which is the evidence of things not seen. Of this belief alone, therefore, is the relation of cause and effect an object.

THE three propositions, already considered, form a whole, independently of those which follow. They comprehend all that part of the theory, on which Mr. Hume has unfortunate-



ly drawn unjust suspicion, by giving it a name, which the vanity and folly and guilt of genius have taught us to hold in dread. He has termed it *sceptical doubts*; but it is a mild and moderate scepticism, which suffers us to take shelter in a first principle of intuitive belief, and is, in truth, the only part of the theory which at all deserves our approbation. In every reasoning, however small its number of propositions, there must always be one proposition assumed without proof; and it is not wonderful, therefore, that, in our reasonings concerning matters of fact, Mr. Hume should have been able to point out such a proposition. He has shewn us, that we *believe*, rather than *discover*, the relation of cause and effect. But, had it been true, that the relation of cause and effect is immediately perceptible in objects, or is fairly discoverable by reason, it would still have been in the power of scepticism to shew some other principle, which, in our reasonings concerning matters of fact, we believe, rather than discover. Mr. Hume has indeed shewn, that every reasoning, which implies the belief

of causation, is, in some degree, hypothetical, and depends on the truth of that faith by which we suppose the relation of cause and effect ; but the reasoning must have been, at any rate, hypothetical, and have depended on the truth of some assumed principle, not more generally admitted. This remark will be afterwards of more importance, when we consider the dangerous consequences, which have been supposed to flow from Mr. Hume's theory. It is a remark, of which, apparently, he was not aware himself. He seems to consider the possible fallacy of our reasoning on matters of fact to depend wholly on the assumption of the future similarity of antecedents and consequents, and, as if struck with wonder, that a proposition should be believed intuitively, attempts to give a ' sceptical solution' of the mystery, which is, in truth, no solution, but only an unwarranted limitation and modification of it, and which, though it were perfectly just, would still leave some intuitive belief, as mysterious, to be wondered at, but not to be solved, by future inquirers.

AT this point, our inquiry might rest, if it were confined to the relation of cause and effect, without reference to the particular opinions of any theorist. We have traced our belief of that relation, for which no perception, nor inference, can directly account, to its source, in the constitution of our mind, and we have thus discovered the origin of that *idea of power*, for the developement of which, as we shall afterwards find, Mr. Hume supposes a much longer and more complicated process to be necessary. *Power* is nothing more, than that *invariableness of antecedence*, which is implied in the belief of causation. The belief, indeed, is instinctive ; but the ideas, which flow from that belief, must be the same, whether it be founded on immediate perception, or on the slower results of reasoning, or on the instinctive feelings of our mind. If we consider a loadstone, not merely as that, the appearance of which preceded the motion of a piece of iron in its vicinity, but, as that, the appearance of which will, in all future time, be followed by the motion of a piece of iron in its vicinity,

we have as clear a conception of this quality of the loadstone,—its *attraction*, in the strict Newtonian sense of that term,—as we have of its dusky hue : for, without such a conception, our *belief* of the future unexisting fact would be impossible. It may be said, indeed, that the idea of attraction is an affection of our mind only, not derived from any similar affection or separate existence of external matter; but the idea of colour is nothing more than an affection of our mind, and, if it be impossible for us not to ascribe the one to external objects, it is equally impossible for us not to ascribe the other. Of this quality of the loadstone *magnetism* is the particular name, from which *power* differs only as it is a general name, including, with magnetism, all cases of future invariable antecedence, whatever the antecedents and consequents may be. We know not what it is, which renders it impossible for us, not to ascribe this particular antecedence to the loadstone more than to flint ; but as little do we know what it is, which renders the dusky loadstone, more than snow, an absorber of certain incident rays of light. The

idea of power, it may even be said, is implied in every other idea, or, at least, is implied in the words which we use to express them. When we speak of the *whiteness* of snow, the *heaviness* of iron, the *ductility* of gold, we allude to these, not as past sensations only, but as future qualities. We take for granted that similarity \* of the future to the past which, referred to a particular object, is power ; and we

\* An attempt has been made to found an argument on the etymology of many of the words of causation in common use, as signifying originally only antecedence and consequence. But it should be remembered, that *the thing before*, when nothing is added to modify its meaning, may signify as much the thing *which will always be before*, as the thing *which has always been before*. Even though this objection were omitted, and though every word, significant of power, were shown to mean only antecedence, the argument would be of very little weight ; for, whatever be our theory of the relation of antecedents and consequents, as closely or loosely conjoined, a cause must still be *a thing before* ; and it is such a circumstance of obvious distinction alone, or some other equally obvious, which we must suppose the rude framers of language to have adopted in their classification of events. To how coarse and heavy an original have many of our most refined and *winged* words been traced by the acuteness of modern philology !

mean to assert, that snow will, to-morrow and for ever, be white, iron heavy, gold ductile.

THE belief, that something stronger, than mere precession however certain and similar, is implied in *power*, and in all the synonymous expressions of agency and production, has arisen, in a great measure, from our habit of applying *sequence*, and other similar terms, rather to the successions of phenomena which are past, than to those which are to come. In the past, we have known casual, as well as uniform sequences ; and, as the peculiar circumstance of uniformity is comprehended with proximity in the single word *cause*, we are accustomed, for conciseness, to adopt that word alone, or some other single word of the same meaning, when the great circumstance of invariableness is meant to be strongly expressed, and to apply the terms of mere succession, only to those events, in which we have no regard to uniformity of order, and in which the successions, therefore, may have been altogether casual. *Cause* and *sequence* thus assume to

our mind an appearance of opposition, rather than of similarity. When, however, in our speculations on the connections of events, we reduce *cause*, by analytic definition, to its two elements of immediate priority and invariableness, we are obliged, as we cannot use any of those single words which are exactly tautologous, to revert to the use of the term *sequence*, and to qualify it by some appropriate adjective. Yet the influence of the former habit of opposition still remains ; and therefore, on the first enunciation of the proposition, that cause and effect are but a species of sequence, we feel a sort of discrepancy, in the words *cause* and *sequence*, which the mere addition of the adjective *invariable* is not able to remove. Our hesitation, in part also, arises from want of sufficient attention to the difference of *uniform* and *invariable* antecedence. *Uniform* antecedence, which has reference to the past only, does not imply the idea of power ; but *invariable* antecedence, which has reference, not merely to the past, but to *every future case*, is the most exact definition, which can be given,

of power. *Of this we have an accurate conception, and of more than this we have no conception* : for, though we speak metaphorically of a bond connecting events, we do not mean to assert, that we have knowledge of the actual existence of a third intermediate object ; as this would only transfer a supposed difficulty, from one object to another, and leave, between the new antecedent and its consequent, an invariableness of sequence, as inexplicable as before. It is, in truth, *not as expressing more than invariableness of sequence, but merely as being the strongest figurative expression of invariableness of sequence*, that *bond*, and its various synonymes, have been introduced into the popular philosophy of cause and effect : for the only circumstance, in which two bodies, bound together, differ from two similar bodies, which are not bound together, is, that in the former case the appearance of one of the bodies is a mark of the immediate appearance of the other, in future time as well as in the present, while, in the latter case, any casual vicinity, that is perceived by us, may be broken



by the slightest accident of the next moment. A strict examination of our own feelings must be confessed to furnish, in a case of this kind, the most satisfactory evidence. We believe, that we have no direct power over the motion of our heart ; because the wish to quicken or retard its motion is not followed by an increased or diminished velocity of circulation : but we are convinced, that we have in health a direct power over the muscles of our arm ; because we believe, that the desire of moving it will be always followed by its motion, when there is no foreign obstacle to impede it. The desire and the motion are immediately successive ; and the belief of the invariableness of this succession of the motion to our desire constitutes the belief of our muscular power. Let those, who contend for it, as implying invariableness of sequence, but as involving also something more mysterious as essential to the belief, separate in their mind the circumstances involved, and imagine an individual, such as their antagonists represent the whole human race, so constituted, that, *without the presence of the*

*mysterious circumstance supposed*, the motion of his muscles is immediately and invariably successive to his desire of moving them : according to their supposition, this anomalous being, though he be admitted to possess experience of the past immediate sequence of the motion to his desire, and complete assurance, that the sequence will be always the same, can still have no greater belief, that he has *power* over his own muscles, than that he has *power* over the motions of the planetary system, since he is, by supposition, destitute of that, which they contend to be essential to the idea of power ; yet it is surely impossible for us to imagine, that, in such circumstances, no belief of power would be felt by him, or, indeed, that he is, in any respect, constituted differently from his brethren of mankind. That power is creation, no one supposes. Though innumerable successions of causes and effects have taken place, the particles, which constitute the present world, are, we have every reason to believe, exactly the same particles, which constituted the world at the time of its creation.

Certain particles, however, have often changed their place, and have always followed the change of place of certain other particles. This is merely uniform, or *unvaried*, sequence. But he who, in addition to this, believes in *invariable*, as well as uniform, sequence, believes, by the very force of the term which he uses, that the past antecedent will always be followed by the past consequent; or, in other words, that, when the circumstances are the same, the former change *never can take place without being followed by the second*. Events which are *invariable* cannot be considered as loose and casual; for these are the very qualities to which invariableness is opposed: They are *causes* and *effects*, in the strictest sense of those terms. In what their invariableness consists, it is absurd to inquire; as it is absurd to inquire, in what the mutual attractions of the particles of matter consist. We believe, in the latter case, that a body *is* heavy; we believe, in the former case, that the body *will always be* heavy; and with the nature of the attraction, or with the nature of the *perpetual similarity*

of the attraction, no experiment nor reasoning can ever make us more intimately acquainted. To attempt to account for them, by the assertion of *an operating principle* in *causes*, is to be satisfied with a change of sound, when, as far as that change is significant and intelligible, the idea is the same: for, if it be difficult to comprehend invariableness of proximity, as attached to the word *cause*, it is equally difficult to comprehend it, as attached to the words *operating principle*. We should not think highly of the philosophy of him, who should flatter himself, that he had thrown much light on the *gravity* of bodies, by asserting, that it consists in their *weight*: and *an operating principle* in a *cause* is a tautology, equally inelegant, and equally unsatisfactory. It is like a *sweet-making principle* in *sweetness*, and a *principle* in *redness* which *makes it red*: redness, sweetness, invariableness of antecedence, are all which can be understood.

THIS definition of power, it will perhaps be urged, however applicable it may seem to the

phenomena of the subordinate universe, is yet inapplicable to that mighty agency, from which the phenomena of the subordinate universe received their origin ; and, if there be any species of agency, with which it is inconsistent, the general definition of power cannot be received. As the ideas, which we form, of the nature of the Deity, are drawn from the phenomena, which are more immediately present to our observation, and chiefly from the analogy of our own mind,—his goodness, as conceived by us, being only a greater degree of that goodness, of which we have the consciousness in ourselves, and the idea of his designing power, as manifested in the beautiful order of the universe, being only an inference from that order which ourselves produce,—it seems scarcely possible, that our conception of power, as applied to the Supreme Being, should be altogether different from our conception of it, as applied to his creatures : and indeed, when we analyse those great but obscure ideas, which rise in our mind, when we attempt to think of the creation of things, we feel, that it is still only

a sequence of events, which we are considering, though of events, the magnitude of which allows us no comparison, because it has nothing in common with those earthly changes, which fall beneath our view. We do not see any third circumstance, existing intermediately, and binding, as it were, the will of the Omnipotent Creator to the things which are to be : we see only the divine will itself, as if made visible to our imagination, and all nature, at the very moment, rising around. It is evident, that, in the case of the divine agency, as well as in every other instance of causation, the introduction of any circumstance, as a bond of closer connection, would only furnish a new phenomenon, to be itself connected : but, even though it were possible to conceive the closer connection of such a third circumstance, as is supposed, between the will of the Creator and the rise of the universe, it would diminish indeed, but it certainly cannot be supposed to elevate the majesty of the person and of the scene. Our feeling of his omnipotence is not rendered stronger, by the slowness of the com-

plicated process : it is, on the contrary, the immediate succession of the object to the desire, which impresses the force of the omnipotence on our mind. The liveliness of the impression, thus produced, is the very charm and sublimity of that passage of Genesis, descriptive of the creation of light, so often quoted, and so often read with admiration : ‘ And God said, let there be light ; and there was light.’ It is from stating nothing more than the antecedent and consequent, that the majestic simplicity of the description is derived. God speaks, and it is done. We imagine nothing intermediate. In our highest contemplation of his power, we believe only that, when he willed creation, a world arose, and that, in all future time, his will to create cannot exist without being followed by the rise of worlds ; that his will to destroy will be, in like manner, followed by destruction ; and his will to vary the course of things, by miraculous appearances. The will is the only necessary previous change ; and that Being has *almighty power*, whose *every*

*will* is immediately and *invariably followed* by the existence of its object.

THE adoption of this simple definition of creative, as well as created, power, relieves us from much of that confusion, in which the philosophy of cause and effect has been involved by scholastic phraseology. There is, in the strictness of language, but *one* cause, the *proximate* event, or the proximate combination of circumstances, in the order of priority; though, as the proximate event has other circumstances, which invariably precede it, the term *remote cause* may be allowed to those remote circumstances, when a single order of events is considered abstractly. A, being the cause of B, which is the cause of C, may itself be termed a remote cause of C. It must be remembered, however, that the term is allowed, not as expressing any new and different species of relation, but merely for the sake of conciseness, to prevent the necessity of naming every intermediate event in the order; and that, as there is a perpetual interference of such orders



of events, in the variety of simultaneous changes which nature exhibits, the uncertainty of any practical confidence in remote causes must increase, in a very high proportion, with their distance of antecedence. The terms *pre-disposing* and *occasional* cause may be allowed, in like manner, for the convenient expression of those circumstances *of longer continuance*, and *of immediate occurrence*, the combination of which is, in certain cases, necessary for the production of an effect: but still it must be remembered, that these are not separate causes, but parts only, and that the real cause,—the proximate event, of which alone the relation of invariable priority can be asserted,—is the aggregate of circumstances, thus combined. The distinction of *physical* and *efficient* causes is not equally allowable. It serves no purpose of useful abbreviation; and it has tended, more than any other circumstance, to keep alive the belief of some mysterious intermediate existence between events. It is not necessary to the purity of theism, that we should suppose something divine and incomprehensible to be

interposed, amid all those obvious and regular changes which we observe : it is sufficient, that we be fully impressed with the necessity of a Creator, and trace the universe, with all its regularity and beauty, as one great effect, to the almighty source of being. That the will of the Deity modifies immediately\* all the suc-

\* The possibility of the occasional interference of that power which created the world, in varying the usual course of its events, is not denied. But the theory of the divine government, which asserts such occasional interference, is very different from that, which asserts the necessity of the perpetual and uniform interference, as the *immediate*, or, as it has been termed, the *efficient*, cause of all events. The will of the Deity, whether displayed in those obvious variations of events, which are termed *miracles*, or inferred from those supposed secret and invisible changes, which are ascribed to His *providence*, is itself, in all such cases, a *new circumstance of physical causation*, from which a difference of result may naturally be imagined, on the same principle as that, on which we expect a change of product, from any other new combination of physical circumstances.

It is this which forms the true answer to the very erroneous doctrine of Mr. Hume's celebrated Essay on Miracles, the great mistake of which does not consist, as has been imagined, in a miscalculation of the force of testimony ;

cessions of events, has certainly never been proved ; and the supposition is probably only

testimony : for the principle of the calculation must be conceded to him, that, whatever be the source of our early faith in testimony, the rational credit, which we afterwards give to it, depends on our belief of the less improbability of the facts reported, than of the ignorance or fraud of the reporter. The sophistry of the essay lies still deeper, in that false definition of a miracle, which, though perhaps not expressed in very strict language, is implied in the whole course of the reasoning. It is represented by him, as a violation of the laws of nature, implying a difference of effect, when *all* the previous circumstances have been exactly similar. Of such a miracle, it must be allowed, that no testimony can be evidence amounting to proof, since the connection of truth with testimony is less constant, than of phenomena which have been, by supposition, unvaried. But a miracle, by the very confession of its assertors, is an event out of the common course of nature, but not contrary to that course, in the same manner as the shock of an earthquake, and the descent of stones from the sky, are not *violations* of any law of nature, though they are phenomena of very rare occurrence, which require a peculiar combination of the circumstances, that physically precede them. Such a new and peculiar circumstance, or combination of circumstances, is supposed by the assertors of a miracle. They do not contend, that all the previous circumstances were similar, but, on the contrary, that the difference of the effect implies a new circumstance

another shape of that very erroneous theory, which supposes the idea of power to be acquirable only from the changes produced by the operations of mind : but, even though the supposition were admitted to be just, it would not be necessary, on that account, to adopt a new language. The will of the Deity, being the immediate antecedent, would then be itself the true physical cause of every event, of which the circumstances that at present appear to us to be the physical or proximate cause,

circumstance of causation ; and, as all the circumstances, which appear, are the same, they have recourse to the divine volition, as the most probable of unknown circumstances. That a quantity of gunpowder, apparently as inert as the dust on which we tread, should suddenly turn into a force of the most destructive kind, *all the previous circumstances continuing the same*, would be indeed, contrary to the course of nature ; but it would not be contrary to it, if the change were preceded by the application of a single spark : it would surely not be more contrary, if *the new circumstance* were the will of that Being, to whom, we have been led by the most convincing argument, to refer the very existence of the mass itself, and of all the surrounding bodies, on which it operates.

would be only the *remote* cause, being thrown one step back, in the series of causation : or, if we should suppose, that these circumstances *co-exist* with the will of the Deity, in the production of the effect, the whole would then form one aggregate of causation, and the physical and efficient cause would thus be the same, being nothing more than that combination of circumstances, which immediately precedes an event. The proper expression of doubt, therefore, in those who imagine, that there may be a divine interposition in every event, is not, that they are acquainted with the *physical*, and ignorant of the *efficient* cause, but merely, that they are not certain, as to the exact nature and number of the circumstances, which combine, in forming the true physical cause.

THE proposition, that *every thing which begins to exist must have had a cause of its existence*, which has been always considered, as a separate and peculiar axiom, is only another form of expressing that single fact, which the

mind exhibits, in its intuitive belief of causation. *We believe every change to be invariably connected with circumstances immediately prior ;* and this belief involves as much the great event of beginning existence, as the subsequent revolutions of existing things : for, when we think of the world, as beginning to exist, we think also of that prior time, when it had no existence ; and we have thus the feeling of a *change*. By our very nature, we cannot but consider this change, as *invariably connected* with some preceding circumstance. But with that prior *nothing*, which seems to offer itself to our imagination, we know, that the sudden existence cannot be *invariably connected* ; because, in the great portions of the wide space around us, *nothing* exists, and is not followed, in our perception, by the rise of things : the very infinity of space itself must, indeed, on this supposition, have become immediately one infinite and immovable mass. The beginning of existence is a phenomenon, different from those phenomena, which we at present witness ; and the cause of it, if *similar* circum-

stances be *invariably* connected, must be, in like manner, different from the present phenomena. It must be something, however, which cannot exist, without being followed by that rise of being, which we term *creation*. We, therefore, believe the existence of a creating cause : and, from those manifest appearances of order and design, which, though infinitely greater, are still analogous to our own, we infer that the creating cause was the will of an intelligent mind. In all this reasoning, no circumstance of intuitive faith is implied, which is not common to all our reasonings, on the more frequent and obvious phenomena of causation ; and we may therefore conclude, that the proposition, *Every thing which begins to exist must have had a cause of its existence*, is not itself an independent axiom, but is reducible to this more general law of thought, *Every change has had a cause of its existence, in some circumstance, or combination of circumstances, immediately prior*. We believe, that it must have had a cause, from that *necessity in our own nature*,

by which it is impossible for us, to conceive it without one. We cannot consider *any change* without considering it, as the sequence of something prior ; and it surely is not wonderful, therefore, that we cannot conceive, without something prior, *that greatest of all changes*, which consists in the beginning of existence.

IT is this law of thought, which involves the whole doctrine of causation, and from it, as has been already shewn, our idea of power immediately rises, or rather our idea of power is necessarily implied in it. This simple origin of the idea, however, Mr. Hume is unwilling to admit. His theory of ideas obliges him to find, for every\* *idea*, an impression, as its

\* All our *ideas* are, according to Mr. Hume, faint copies of more lively previous feelings, whether of perception or emotion. To these previous feelings he gives the name of *impressions*, and supposes their comparative vividness to be the only circumstance, which distinguishes them from ideas. *Idea* is thus used by him, as the name, not of a class, but of an order. It is synonymous with *idea of memory*, as used by other writers : *impression* is synonymous with their *idea of sense or of perception*, and of *consciousness or reflection*.



prototype ; and, therefore, as he admits that we possess an idea of necessary connection, he labours to discover some impression, from which it may be derived. In the qualities of bodies, considered singly, and even in the observation of their mutual changes, or in the inferences of reason from their mutual changes, he finds it impossible, to discover any such impression ; and, therefore, as

In the strictness of his nominalism, which denies the existence of any idea, that is not, either in whole, or in its parts, a copy of a former impression, Mr. Hume seems to triumph, as if he had discovered a mode of rendering every dispute equally intelligible, and banishing all that jargon which has so long taken possession of metaphysical reasonings, and drawn disgrace upon them.' We have nothing more to do, according to him, than to ask ourselves, when we suspect that a term is employed without meaning,—‘ from what impression is that supposed idea derived ? ’ It is not my purpose at present, to make any comments, on the truth, or the falsehood, of that opinion. It is sufficient to remark the necessity which it imposes on Mr. Hume, of discovering some impression, of which the idea of power may be supposed to be a copy,—a necessity, which diminishes our wonder, at the little similarity of the prototype, in which, as we shall afterwards find, he thinks that he has detected the wished resemblance.

it is easier for a theorist, to struggle with the most stubborn discrepancy, than to abandon a favourite system, he has recourse to circumstances, which, though they leave precisely the same difficulty as before, are at least more complicated, and therefore better fitted to hide an inconsistency, from the author himself, as well as from those whom he addresses. Had his mind not been prepossessed by a rash generalization, Mr. Hume would have found no difficulty, in admitting, that the belief of causation, and therefore the idea of power, may arise intuitively and immediately, from the observation of a change ; which, *if the fact be certain*, is not more mysterious, than the appearance of the wide world of light, which follows a simple affection of the small optic nerve, or the existence of any of those ideas, which he supposes to follow their corresponding impressions. There is confessedly nothing, but the experience of the fact, which prevents our wonder, at the spontaneous rise of any idea, as successive to any impression, and there is no idea, of which the succession is more cer-

tain and universal, than that of the idea of power to the observation of a change. The generalization, however, which excludes such original and immediate ideas, was already formed; and to it all apparent contradictions were sacrificed. We shall accordingly find, in the remaining part of Mr. Hume's theory of causation, a constant labour to avoid a truth, which is for ever forcing itself upon his view; while the acuteness of its author's discernment serves only to render the delusion more striking, which could thus blind, to its own inconsistencies, a mind of the most unsparing quickness, in detecting the errors of others.

THE fourth proposition of Mr. Hume's theory is, that *the relation of cause and effect is believed to exist between objects, only after their customary conjunction is known to us*. The belief, he maintains, does not arise in our mind after a single instance of sequence, but after repeated instances of the same sequence; for it is not on one observation, nor on one result of experiment, that we rely, when we

have full confidence, that we have discovered a cause. But, is it not obvious, that Mr. Hume derives his argument from a state of the mind, very different from that, in which the first trains of events were observed by us? Among so many unconnected, but *co-existing* phenomena, as are perpetually taking place around us, it is impossible, that, in the multitude of trains of sequences, the parts of one train alone should be always observed by us; and the mind, therefore, even though originally led to believe *causation*, or invariable similarity in every sequence, must soon be rendered doubtful of its first belief, when, from the confusion of parts of trains, the expected sequence is found to be different. If, as Mr. Hume confesses, no experience of the past, however long and certain, entitle us to infer a future similarity of result, in the unknown time before us, with any greater evidence to our reason, than may be drawn from the first single instance of sequence, the probability is, that the original belief is not dependent on experience. At whatever stage of observation

our belief begin, whether at the first or the thousandth succession of the same events, the belief itself must still be intuitive ; for the propositions, *B has once succeeded A*, and *B will for ever succeed A*, are not more different than the propositions, *B has a thousand times succeeded A*, and *B will for ever succeed A*. The belief, also, at whatever stage it begin, must be allowed to be capable of being counteracted in particular cases ; for we often cease to believe in causes, the reality of which has for years formed a part of our philosophic creed. The only question then seems to be, whether the belief, equally intuitive on both suppositions, arise at one stage of observation or at another ; and as, on both suppositions, the mature mind, often expecting and often deceived, but deceived always less frequently as the same succession has been more frequently observed, would learn to feel the value of experience, and to withhold its complete assent, till that important confirmation should be given, it is evident, that, on the feelings of advanced years, little reliance can be placed in

the question. We have thus perhaps, at best, only a comparison of probabilities ; but the probabilities are surely much stronger on that side, which asserts the feeling of sequence to be *originally* followed with the belief of power, or invariable future similarity. Does the number of believed causes increase with our years ? Do we not rather remember a time, when, *if without contrary experience*, we had a tendency to combine, as necessarily consecutive, the most loose and unconnected events ? The effect of age seems to have been, not to\* in-

\* The argument, as stated above, was written, when my knowledge of Mr. Hume's theory was derived solely from his Essays, the work which he himself desires to be 'regarded as alone containing his philosophical sentiments and principles.' Since the publication of the first edition of these Observations, I have had the curiosity, to examine that part of THE TREATISE OF HUMAN NATURE, Mr. Hume's original work, which relates to the question of cause and effect ; and, though, as it was not sanctioned by its author's later judgment, I do not feel myself entitled to consider it in the light even of a legitimate commentary on that exposition of his system, which he has delivered in his Essays, it may perhaps be permitted me, to make occasional reference to it in a  
note.

crease, but to diminish, the number of our convictions, by shewing us, that many events,

note. At the same time, I beg it to be understood, that the occasional remarks are made by me, only in illustration of my own view of the subject, and not as furnishing any just additional confutation of those doctrines of his maturer reflection, which alone Mr. Hume has acknowledged.

THE objection, arising from the belief of causation after single sequences, seems to have struck himself. Instead of denying the fact, however, which indeed would have been impossible, he admits it, and endeavours to reconcile it with his system. ‘ ’Tis certain,’ —he says—‘ that not only in philosophy, but even in common life, we may attain the knowledge of a particular cause merely by one experiment, provided it be made with judgment, and after a careful removal of all foreign and superfluous circumstances.’ TREATISE, VOL. I, p. 186. He does not furnish us with any mode, however, of determining, *what are the foreign and superfluous circumstances.* The truth is, that the superfluous circumstances are merely those, of which we have had contrary experience, having observed them before, without the succession of the effect : and, when the complex sequence is stripped of these, *it becomes exactly of the same kind, as the first sequence observed by us, when we had no experience either of essential or of superfluous circumstances.* If by one observation, provided it be made with judgment, we can attain the knowledge of a particular cause, we can attain it, only as being led to believe causation, in the prior of two events, where there is no con-

trary

which we considered as necessarily antecedent of others, have not been followed by them.

trary experience ; and, if we be led to believe it, in such circumstances, the observation of sequence must have been originally and immediately accompanied with the belief of causation. It is not from the experience of custom, that we form our conclusion ; for all, which that experience tells us, *is not that A is the cause of X*, which is the real phenomenon considered, but merely that B and C, which co-exist with A, are not the cause of X, but are foreign and superfluous circumstances, since they have been often observed before, without the succession of X. The argument, by which Mr. Hume endeavours to systematize this anomaly, is truly singular, when considered in relation to that very nice scepticism, on which his own system is founded. He acknowledges, that the connection of the ideas of the first and second objects of a sequence is not habitual, after one experiment, but contends, that the connection is comprehended in another, which has been previously acquired by habit. ‘ The difficulty,’—he observes—‘ will vanish, if we consider, that though we are here suppos’d to have had only one experiment of a particular effect, yet we have many millions to convince us of this principle, *that like objects, placed in like circumstances, will always produce like effects* ; and as this principle has established itself by a sufficient custom, it bestows an evidence and firmness on any opinion, to which it can be apply’d.’ The sophism of this argument consists in the different meanings, which may be attached to the phrase *like objects*.

It



When we mix two substances, before uncombined, and a peculiar product appears, what is the state of our mind? Do we consider the mixture and the product, as two loose phenomena, unconnected, as completely, as the appearance of the new chemical substance in our vessel, and the appearance of a friend, who accidentally enters our apartment at the mo-

It may signify *the many like objects*, of which we have had customary experience, or it may signify *ALL like objects*, of which we have had no customary experience. In the former sense only, can it be said, that we have millions of experiments to convince us of the truth of the principle asserted; but in the latter sense only, can it be of any aid to Mr. Hume. The experience of a million sequences cannot go beyond a million sequences; and, though we may know, that A has been a million times followed by X, and B by Y, we are not entitled, on Mr. Hume's own strict principles of scepticism, to infer from these dissimilar sequences, that C, of the priority of which we have had no customary experience, is the cause of Z. It surely would be no very great extension of this concession, to suppose, that A, which has a million times preceded X, would, if it existed again, be again followed by X; and, if the legitimacy of this inference be admitted, all the force of Mr. Hume's scepticism on the relation of cause and effect is immediately destroyed.

ment? It is this state of mind alone, which can be reconciled with Mr. Hume's supposition; but it is surely not the state of mind of the chemist. He believes the product to be the *effect* of the mixture, or, if he have not absolute assurance, the want of conviction *arises only from the doubts which are suggested by his past experience*. The accidental changes of temperature, the impurity of the substances used, the presence of air, or of other foreign matters, in the vessel, and the peculiar affinities of the vessel itself, occur to him *as causes* which may have modified the result. To these he turns his attention. By some possible variation of these, he believes, that the event may possibly be different; but, were he certain, that all these circumstances would for ever be the same, he would have no doubt, that the resulting product also would for ever be the same. The exact similarity of all circumstances being supposed, his conviction, after one experiment, would be, in every respect, as complete, as after a thousand repetitions. It is not necessary, to be a practised ex-

perimentalist, to have felt this confutation of Mr. Hume's theory. In the common circumstances of life, how often have we felt a struggle, between our tendency to conjoin events, and the past experience, which shews us that they have no necessary connection? It is a struggle, like that which we feel with another very strong principle of belief, when we look through an optical instrument, on a landscape that is familiar to us. The church, and the lake, and its hanging wood, appear to us indeed to be near; but we have a stronger conviction, from past experience, that they are far off: and we do not hasten, as if he were before us, to meet the friend, whom we see approaching at the very end of our telescope. Did *one train of phenomena alone* take place in nature, it is probable, that our conviction would be in every case undoubting; but we learn, from varied disappointment, that innumerable trains are taking place together, and we feel a want of certainty,—*but it is in this only*, that we are ignorant, *to which of the trains the particular phenomenon belongs*. The very know-

ledge, that there are separate trains of phenomena, is itself one of the strongest proofs, that the belief of causation is immediate. It is seldom that one simple sensation exists ; or, rather, no sensation is entirely simple. Various objects at the same moment affect us, and form an aggregate, which is, probably, at no other period exactly the same. If, therefore, the return of antecedents and consequents, exactly similar, were necessary, before any belief could arise, it never would arise ; as, if there was no presumption that A, which once before succeeded X, would succeed it again, more than B, or C, which we had never before observed to succeed X, it would be impossible, when X, Y, Z, were, at one moment, producing A, B, C, to determine, of which part of the aggregate the renewed A was the consequence. The analysis and distribution depend only on the belief, or presumption, which followed the observation of the first sequence. Without this, the mixed sequence would be as loose as before ; and hence, the very supposition, that custom has any effect in

determining our belief, is an avowal, that a previous anticipation existed. Even with all the doubts, which the experience of many years has given us, we never hesitate, in simpler cases, in which we less suspect concurring trains, to believe, where, according to Mr. Hume, belief is impossible. The organ of taste, for instance, is of easy limitation, with little chance of the admixture of foreign bodies. When a new fruit is presented to us, and we apply it to that organ, though altogether deprived of the aid of customary connection, and therefore, according to Mr. Hume, incapable of forming any opinion, but that of casual sequence, we have no scruple in ascribing the new sensation to the new object, and we say, that it is sweet, or acid, or bitter. The epicure, who relishes a new ragout, knows well, that the source of his pleasure is in the dish before him, and, if he wish to enjoy it again, it is to that dish alone he returns, though twenty new objects be around it. We pluck a flower, which we have never before seen ; we are sensible of a disagreeable odour ; and we

throw away the flower, as if from it the odour arose. The boy, who for the first time catches a bee, and is astonished to feel its sting, does not wait for a second and third application of the poison, before he learn to fear it in future. Whether his belief be consistent with reason, is not the inquiry. It has been already admitted, that the similarity of future events is not a conclusion of reason, derived from the perceived agreement of propositions, but is a single unconnected proposition, believed, not judged, that rises in the mind, inevitably, and with irresistible conviction. Whether true or false, the belief is in these cases felt, and it is felt without even the possibility of a perceived customary conjunction. Would Mr. Hume himself have considered the sequences as purely accidental? He owns, that, ‘when a child has felt the sensation of pain from touching the flame of a candle, he will be careful not to put his hand near any candle:’ yet the child, even though old enough, to have acquired an accurate knowledge of the places of objects, and thus to be certain that it is the candle which

is burning him, should, in such circumstances, think no more of removing his finger from the flame, than of shaking off the bandage of his foot. As the question is not concerning the justness of belief, but concerning the period of its rise, there is one case, which may be considered, as almost decisive of it. We often see a phenomenon, for the first time, without having attended to the particular circumstances, which preceded it. If it be the experience of custom alone, which can give us that belief of connection, by which we denominate a change an *effect*, we are, in this case, not merely without a customary sequence ; we have not even a single case of it. Yet there is no one, who does not believe the change to be *an effect*, as completely as if he had witnessed every preceding circumstance. On this one point he is in no suspense, and waits, only to discover *what* object, in the uniform and regular order of succession, was its correlative cause. Are we then to assert, that all phenomena, before repeated experience of their particular conjunctions, appear to us equally loose, and that the

supposition of a peculiar connection can in no instance arise, till the observed conjunction has been customary? Do not all the circumstances of our belief rather support the contrary opinion, that a peculiar connection may be supposed, even after a single sequence; that, as innumerable trains of phenomena are taking place together, and mingling in our observation, the *primary* effect of experience has been, not to increase, but to weaken, our belief of the connection of events, by presenting to us, as a regular train of consequents, irregular portions of different co-existing trains; that, our expectation of uniformity being thus often disappointed, a habit of doubt has arisen, and the *secondary* influence of experience begins to operate, which, by shewing us the customary successions of events, though it give us not our first notion of the connection of trains of phenomena, informs us, with greater certainty, to which, of many co-existing trains, a particular phenomenon belongs; that hence the belief of connection, which, according to Mr. Hume, should, in every case, depend on



the number of observations, and on nothing more, is more or less early, according to the nature of the particular phenomena observed, as these furnish greater or less room for imagining a number of concurring trains, being immediate, or almost immediate, where the new sequence is simple, and of longer suspense, where the sequence is complex.

If the preceding reasoning be just, the error of Mr. Hume evidently consists, not in affirming too much, but in affirming too little: for, if any succession of events can suggest the expectation of future similarity, there is surely nothing in the frequent recurrence of the succession, which can diminish the expectation. It may not be greater, after it has been often confirmed, but it certainly cannot be less; and the theory is therefore objectionable, only as confining, to sequences that have been often observed, a belief, which, originally at least, is common to them with other sequences. Yet, by a singular mistake, Mr. Hume has been censured by his opponents, as if his affirmation

had been too large. Thus, it has been maintained, that there are cases of uniform succession, in which the belief of causation is never felt, since, from the very commencement of our existence, \* day has succeeded night in endless return, without any supposition arising, that night is the cause of day. But it should be remembered, that *day* and *night* are not words which denote two particular phenomena, but are words invented by us to express long series of phenomena. What various appearances of nature, from the freshness of the first morning beam, to the last languor of the evening sky, changing with the progress of the seasons, and dependent on the accidents of temperature, and vapour, and wind, are included in every day ! These are not one, because the word which expresses them is one ;

\* ‘ The third argument is, that what we call a cause, is only something antecedent to, and always conjoined with the effect.—It is sufficient here to observe, that we may learn from it that night is the cause of day ; and day the cause of night : for no two things have more constantly followed each other since the beginning of the world.’ Reid, on the Intellectual Powers, Essay vi, chap. 6.

and it is the believed relation of single events, not the arbitrary combinations of language, which Mr. Hume professes to explain. If, therefore, there be any force in the objection, it must be shewn, that, notwithstanding the customary conjunction, we do not believe the relation of cause and effect to exist, between the successive \* *pairs* of that multitude of

\* The mistake of Dr. Reid is an instance of a species of inaccuracy, perhaps the most common in the present advanced period of science, and the least easy to be prevented, by any rules, which philosophic criticism can prescribe. The great principle of induction is readily understood, and is of obvious application. To point out the absurdity of imagining causes, which no observation, nor experiment has developed, is not very difficult; and the very imagination of such a cause, being a new circumstance of thought, is felt immediately by the mind itself: but the generalizations of language are made for us by others, and our mind receives them, without any definite analysis, almost as readily, as it receives the simple names of persons and things. The separate co-existing phenomena, and the separate sequences of a long succession of events, which it has been found convenient to comprehend in a single word, are thus, from the constant use of that single word, regarded by the mind, almost in the same manner, as if they were only one phenomenon, or one event. The advantage

events, which we denominate night and day. What then are the great events included in

age of the verbal abbreviation is indeed evident ; as a process, consisting of many sequences, is thus easily remembered by us, when a variety of names, expressive of the different sequences, would have been altogether burthensome to the memory, and would probably have been, in part at least, forgotten : but the abbreviation is not on that account less dangerous to our accuracy of reasoning, by leading us to consider, as common to all the parts of a long and complicated process, the circumstances, which belong only to particular parts of the series. The most common form of this deception is when we ascribe to the prior sequences that ultimate result, which belongs only to the last sequence of the order : but, even throughout the whole order, it leads us, by a similar generalization of what is particular, to suppose relations, where there are none, and to neglect them, where they are. There is hence a cause of perpetual retardation to the progress of science, existing in the circumstances of the progress itself ; the very refinements of language, to which it necessarily gives rise, seducing us insensibly into an error, of exactly the same kind, as that which is produced more obviously, by the rude and scanty observations, with which science begins. In both cases, though from very different causes, we pass frequently from the most striking phenomena, to other striking phenomena, without regarding the innumerable phenomena which intervene ; because these are, in the one case, not observed by us, and, in the other,

those terms? If we consider them philosophically, they are the series of positions in relation to the sun, at which the earth arrives, in

other, form a forgotten or neglected part of that whole, which our general term expresses. There is scarcely a single controversy, in the history of any one of the departments of physics, in which the confusion has not in a great measure arisen from some very simple error of this kind, by which that which was true, of a part of a process, was false, when asserted of the whole process: and indeed we find the contest, to be more usually an opposition of errors, than of truth and error; the opponents differing only in the parts of the process, which they considered as representing the whole. A habit of constant and quick analysis of the general words presented to us is in effect, to use the very striking phrase of Lord Bacon, the acquisition by the mind of *a new organ*. The generalizations of language are thus made to answer the only useful purposes, for which they were devised, that of conciseness, in our own silent reflections, and in our communications to others, and of an artificial memory, suggesting to us by association the phenomena comprehended in them. To have thus completely under our command every term of the daily nomenclature which we use, however slightly such a power may be estimated by superficial thinkers, would be indeed to have a dominion of no common kind: for it would be to have the mastery of that, which subjects, in some degree, even the most philosophic understandings, and which enslaves, and fetters with innumerable prejudices, the less discriminating multitudes of our race.

the course of its diurnal revolution ; and, in this view, there is surely no one, who doubts, that the motion of the earth, immediately before sun-rise, is the cause of the position, which renders that glorious luminary visible to us. If we consider the phenomena of night and day, in a more vulgar sense, they include various degrees of darkness and light, with some of the chief changes of appearance in the heavenly bodies. Even in this sense, there is no one who doubts, that the rising of the sun is the cause of the light which follows it, and that its setting is the cause of the subsequent darkness. That darkness and light mutually produce each other, they do not believe : and, if they did believe it, their belief, instead of confirming the truth of Mr. Hume's theory, would prove it to be false ; as it would prove the relation of cause and effect to be supposed, where there has been no customary connection. How often, during a long and sleepless night, does the sensation of darkness exist, without being followed by the sensation of light ! We perceive the gloom ;—we feel our own position in bed, or

some bodily or mental pain, which prevents repose;—innumerable thoughts arise, at intervals, in our mind, and with these the perception of gloom is occasionally mingled, without being followed by the perception of light. At last light is perceived, and, as mingled with all our occupations and pleasures, is perceived innumerable times during the day, without having, for its immediate consequence, the sensation of darkness. Can we then be said, to have an uniform experience of the conjunction of the two sensations? Do they not rather appear to follow each other loosely and variously, like those irregular successions of events, which we denominate accidental? In the vulgar, therefore, as well as in the philosophic sense of the terms, the recurrence of day and night furnishes no valid objection to Mr. Hume's theory.

THE general conclusion, accordingly, to which we are led, on the fourth proposition, is, that the experience of customary succession is not necessary to the belief of future similarity of sequence; but that, where, from a sup-

posed concurrence of separate trains of phenomena, any doubt is felt, the influence of the experience of customary succession is always to diminish the doubt.

THE fifth proposition of Mr. Hume's theory is of less consequence, as it proceeds on the belief of the fourth, of the falsehood of which, however, it will be additional evidence, if this also be found to be false; since it states the mode, in which, he maintains, that experience, if it be the cause of belief, must be supposed to have influence. [He does not maintain, however, that, after all, the belief is not instinctive, but only that certain circumstances are necessary, before the instinctive feeling arise. *When two objects have been frequently observed in succession, the mind passes readily from the idea of one to the idea of the other: from this tendency to transition, and from the greater vividness of the idea thus more readily suggested, there arises a belief of the relation of cause and effect between them; the transition, in the mind itself, being the impression, from which the*



*idea of the necessary connection of the objects, as cause and effect, is derived.* Such is the sum of Mr. Hume's professed solution, as given by him in his fifth and seventh sections, a solution, which, when examined narrowly, appears too absurd to have satisfied even its author, and which strikes us with double astonishment, when we consider, that its author was Mr. Hume. That it has been even for a moment received by others, can be accounted for, only from the shelter, which the errors of thought have received from the confusion of the statement: for, though undoubtedly his is not a name, of which any philosopher can speak lightly, and though I feel all the reverence, which is due to his general acuteness, and to the wonderful talents which, in many respects, he possessed, I must confess, that the essays, in which, after having given his sceptical doubts, he proceeds to explain the origin of our belief of causation, are, in the impartial estimate which I should form of that part of the theory considered alone, to be ranked with our least perfect specimens of metaphysical

disquisition. All is perplexity of language, and hypothesis, which is at variance with almost every fact; and, if at any time we imagine, that we have discovered the acuteness, which before delighted us, in the sceptical part of the theory, it is only in the repetitions of those very doubts, which are occasionally sprinkled over the less ingenious attempt to solve them.

BEFORE the fifth proposition can be sufficiently understood, it will be necessary to examine another more general doctrine, which Mr. Hume has mingled with it.—‘The difference between fiction and belief,’ he says, ‘lies in some sentiment or feeling, which is annexed to the latter, not to the former;’ and he then, with some labour of reasoning, demonstrates, that the sentiment thus annexed to belief, and constituting belief, is—*belief*. Belief itself distinguishes belief from fiction; or, in other words, fiction is not belief. This is certainly just; but would it not have been better, at once to own, that the feelings of

reality and fiction are by their very nature different, than, even for a moment, to consider the difference as susceptible of proof, since the proof must be only a repetition of the difference? Belief he afterwards defines, to be ‘ nothing but a more vivid, lively, forcible, firm, steady, conception of an object, than what the imagination alone is ever able to attain.’\* That

\* He adds:—‘ This variety of terms, which may seem so unphilosophical, is intended only to express that act of the mind, which renders realities, or what is taken for such, more present to us than fictions, causes them to weigh more in the thought, and gives them a superior influence on the passions and imagination. Provided we agree about the thing, it is needless to dispute about the terms. The imagination has the command over all its ideas, and can join and mix and vary them, in all the ways possible. It may conceive fictitious objects, with all the circumstances of place and time. It may set them in a manner before our eyes, in their true colours, just as they might have existed. But as it is impossible, that this faculty of imagination can ever, of itself, reach belief, it is evident, that belief consists not in the peculiar nature or order of ideas, but in the manner of their conception, and in their feeling to the mind.’ This is partly an example of reasoning in a circle, as, in order to shew what it is, which renders realities more present to us than fictions, *it assumes it to be impossible*, that the imagination  
can

imagination is sometimes able to attain whatever qualities are essential to belief, the phenomena of reverie and of dreaming sufficiently shew. But, omitting this smaller error of definition, can we acquiesce in a statement of the essentials of belief, which has reference only to a single class of realities? Mr. Hume's doctrine is perfectly just, when it does not extend beyond the present moment, but is confined to the objects which we believe to be actually present to our senses: for, when sensations and ideas of imagination occur together, we ascribe external and independent reality, only to the more vivid of the two; and in every case, except impassioned reverie, sensations are the more vivid. But belief of reality is not confined to the objects, that are considered by us, as actually present; and, in all other cases of belief, it is the effect of reasoning, or

can ever, of itself, reach belief, and is partly a contradiction to itself, as it supposes, that imagination can set objects before us *in their true colours, just as they might have existed*, and yet supposes fictions to differ from realities, in being *less vivid*.

of former conviction, or of testimony, not of any peculiar quality of the present ideas. That it implies a peculiar ‘manner of conception,’ and ‘feeling to the mind,’ must be admitted: for belief is certainly not the same feeling as disbelief. But Mr. Hume, though he occasionally overshadow his subject, with the pomp of such words of sound, that signify nothing, must, if his theory have any consistency, confine it to the peculiar steadiness and liveliness of certain conceptions, compared with others. The sole question, therefore, is, whether, in every case of belief, our conceptions of objects, as real, be more ‘vivid, lively, forcible, firm, steady,’ than when we conceive them, as feigned. When we believe, after having almost forgotten his exploits, without being informed of a single feature of his face, or knowing even whether he was tall or short, that Arminius, the assertor of the liberty of Germany, existed; and, when we acknowledge, as wholly feigned, the existence of the heroine of a fashionable novel, of whose exact stature, and proportions, and graces, and

dimples, and whiteness of teeth, and languishing blueness of eyes, a brilliant portraiture is given us, and whose mournful adventures we are able to detail, in the very succession in which their author has represented them ;—when the conviction is so different, is it not from our knowledge of the different species of writing, that our judgment is formed? Or is it a juster theory of our sentiment in both cases, that we believe, and disbelieve, because our conception of the modern heroine is less lively, than that of the ancient hero? Have we a less firm conception of Othello, than of the humble soldiers who fought in the battle of Agincourt ; and, when the conqueror of that great day is represented in our theatres, is the mimic king, or his real prototype, more steadily before us? How many are there, who, during a long life spent in a foreign country, have lost, in their pictures of remembrance, almost every trace of the friends of their youth! Yet the faint conceptions that arise are dear to them still, not as fictions, but as realities ; and it is not from any fading of memory that they

tremble, when they fear, that the friends, for whom they are anxious, exist no more. The information, in such circumstances, of the actual death of any one, and the sad belief, with which it is accompanied, do not destroy, nor impair, a single remembrance, but brighten many fading images, and recal others which were lost, and seem to restore the full idea of the person, in the certainty that he is himself no longer in existence. The remark may be extended to all our passions. Desire implies the present non-existence of the good which is its object : but it surely implies peculiar vividness of the idea of the unexisting good ; and he who fails in his endeavour to realize it, whatever the object may be, has, in the regret and mortification, which follow the failure, as fixed a conception of the object, as if his ambition had been fully gratified. Even in those cases, in which we have no personal concern, and are led along in passive sympathy, our belief has no connection with distinctness or indistinctness of imagination. The very wildness and wonderfulness of romance, as they

excite peculiar emotion, are indeed a cause not of less but of more lively conception; and, when we are interested in our knight, the tower and the giant rise before us in stronger colours, than the host and his inn on a modern highway. How very readily, on the testimony of a friend of known veracity, do we assent to the truth of circumstances, which are so obscurely present to our mind, that we can scarcely be said to conceive them: and, without a faith of this kind, how very limited would be our knowledge; since it must be confined to the objects, which have come under our own senses, excluding all that infinity of objects, which is distant from us, either in place or time! Greece, and Italy, and Pharsalia, and its rival chiefs, and even the heroes of our own time, whom we have never had an opportunity of seeing, and the greater part of the very island in which we live, have but a faint and shadowy existence in our thought. Even the strongest of all belief, that which is accompanied with conviction of the absurdity of any opposite proposition, is conversant in abstrac-



tions, which are the least lively of all ideas. Who is there, that can readily picture to himself a polygon of a thousand sides? We understand, indeed, what is meant by mathematical lines and surfaces, or we could not understand the properties of mathematical lines and surfaces: but the generalizations themselves are so little vivid, that their existence, as different from particular ideas, seems now to be denied by the greater number of philosophers; though undoubtedly, if we had only \* particular ideas, we never could under-

\* ‘MUCH of the ridicule which has been thrown on the defenders of general ideas,’ as I have elsewhere remarked, ‘has been occasioned by the improper use of the indefinite article. To say, that we have a general idea of *a triangle*, which is not equilateral, isosceles, nor scalene, is indeed absurd: for *a triangle* must be particular, and, consequently, of one of these species; and we cannot have a general idea of a particular existence. But we may, notwithstanding, have a general idea of the nature of triangles; or, in other words, their common properties may be objects of thought, without any reference to their particular degrees.’—OBSERVATIONS ON THE ZOONOMIA OF ERASMUS DARWIN, M. D. p. 150.

stand, so as to deny or assent to any universal proposition. The *variæ plumæ*, and the un-

As the existence of general ideas, with the complete conviction attached in mathematics to every demonstration of their properties, is one of the strongest objections to Mr. Hume's theory of belief, may I be permitted, to extend the quotation still farther? I use the opportunity, the more readily, because I quote from a work, which is not professedly written on the subject of general ideas, and because the nominalism, which excludes them, is the most prevalent heresy of modern metaphysics. Not content with denying that separate external essence of general images, which was once absurdly supposed, it denies even the intellectual conceptions themselves, as affections of mind existing independently of the words which express them. Yet general terms, assuredly, are not insignificant: and, if they be significant, the implied relation in each cannot be supposed to depend on the word, but the word must have been invented, to express the implied relation. It is indeed asserted, that, in mathematics, the proposition becomes general, not because any term in the demonstration is itself understood generally, but because nothing is expressed in the demonstration, which is limited to one particular diagram; that, although the idea, for example, which we have in view, in our demonstration of the properties of triangles, be that of an isosceles rectangular triangle, the sides of which are of a determinate length, we are, notwithstanding, certain that the demonstration extends to triangles of every species and magnitude, be-

cause

*dique collata membra*, which Horace supposes to be presented to us by a painter, are as much

cause there is no allusion in it, to that particular species, which alone is the object of our conception. On this hypothesis, ' it will be admitted, that the right angle, and the equality of two of the sides, and the determinate length of the whole, are not expressed in the words of the demonstration; but words are of consequence, only as they suggest ideas, and the ideas, suggested by the demonstration, are the same, as if these particular relations of the triangle had been mentioned, at every step. It is not said, that the three angles are equal to two right angles, because one of them is a right angle, or because the sides, which comprehend that angle, are of the same length; but it is proved, that the three angles of the triangle, which has one of its angles a right angle, and the sides, which comprehend that angle, of equal length, are together equal to two right angles. This particular demonstration is applicable only to triangles, of one particular form. I cannot infer from it the existence of the same property, in figures, essentially different: for, unless we admit the existence of general ideas, an equilateral triangle differs as much from a scalene rectangular triangle, as from a square. In both cases, there is no medium of comparison. To say, that the two triangles agree, in having three sides, and three angles, is to say, that there are general ideas of sides, and angles: for, if they be particularized, and if by the words *sides*, and *angles*, be meant equal sides, and equal angles, it is evident, that

an object of our disbelief, in the mere verbal description, as if they were actually depicted

the two triangles, do not agree, in the slightest circumstance. Admitting, therefore, that I can enunciate a general proposition, the conception of which is impossible, I can be certain, that the three angles of every triangle are together equal to two right angles, only when it has been demonstrated of triangles, of every variety of figure ; and, before this can be done, I must have it in my power to limit space, and chain down imagination.

‘ THE generality of an idea consists, according to Berkeley, in suggesting indifferently a multitude of other ideas. “ An idea, which considered in itself is particular, becomes general, by being made to represent or stand for *all other particular ideas of the same sort*. “ To make this plain by an example, suppose a geometer is demonstrating the method, of cutting a line in two equal parts. He draws, for instance, a black line, of an inch in length, this which in itself is a particular line, is nevertheless with regard to its signification general, since as it is there used, it represents all particular lines whatsoever ; so that what is demonstrated of it, is demonstrated of all lines, or, in other words, of a line in general. And as that particular line becomes general, by being made a sign, so the name *line*, which taken absolutely is particular, by being a sign is made general. And as the former owes its generality, not to its being the sign  
“ of

before us, in the liveliest colours of art. ‘ In our conception,’ says Mr. Hume, ‘ we can

“ of an abstract or general line, but of all particular  
 “ right lines that may possibly exist ; so the latter must  
 “ be thought to derive its generality from the same  
 “ cause, namely, the various particular lines which it  
 “ indifferently denotes.” \* This statement evidently takes for granted the existence of general ideas : for, unless that be admitted, what is meant by the limitation of the sign to ideas, *of the same sort* ; since, according to his own principle, it is the application of the sign alone, which constitutes the sort ? We cannot have a conception of the circumstances of resemblance : for that would be an abstract general idea ; so that, in arrangement, the naturalist should study terms, rather than qualities, and consider bodies, expressed by similar sound, and orthography, as necessarily belonging to the same class. In the instance adduced, unless we can consider the evenness, between extreme points, without regard to length, or shortness, it is impossible that *line* should ever become general, even in Bishop Berkeley’s sense : for, considered absolutely, an inch is essentially different from a yard. When a geometer, therefore, draws a straight line, an inch in length, it may, with as much reason, represent a circle, as another straight line, a yard in length ; unless he have an abstract idea of the nature of a line : and to say, that the inch *represents all particular lines whatsoever*, without assigning any reason of that general representation, is to take for granted the

\* Berkeley’s Works, vol. i, p. 10.

join the head of a man to the body of a horse; but it is not in our power to believe that such an animal has ever really existed.' That we have not the power, is true; but it is not equally true, that our conception is less lively. We picture \* Bottom, the weaver, as readily, after his transmutation of head, as before it; though we may not be enamoured of him, after his metamorphosis, like the fairy Queen. The Centaurs of the ancient fable appear before us as distinctly, in the combat, as the Lapithæ, who are opposed to them. There are few, indeed, who have not a more accurate idea of the body of a horse with the head of a man, than of a hippopotamus, or an ouran-outang;

the truth of the opinion, against which the instance is adduced. Even if a line were supposed to be rendered general, by suggesting indifferently various magnitudes, the power of suggesting must be allowed to be different from the suggestion itself. The idea of an inch, suggested, is equally particular, whether we allow, or deny, that the same sign might also have suggested different magnitudes; and general demonstration will thus be impossible, on either hypothesis.' OBSERVATIONS, &c, p. 142.

\* *Midsummer Night's Dream.*

and easy would it be to acquire a perfect knowledge of botany, if of every exotic, whose name and existence we have learned, we had already a more distinct conception, than of a tree, exactly similar in the shape of its parts to the oak or the elm before our door, but with a trunk of gold, and branches and leaves of silver. By various nations, various objects are believed to exist ;—in the multitude of beings, there is one alone, whose existence is an object of universal belief :—it is that great, but incomprehensible Being, on whom, even in our adoration of his goodness, we almost tremble to fix our imagination.

BELIEF, then, arising often from testimony, in events which we have never had an opportunity of witnessing, or from the faint memory of former conviction, or from the calm results of abstract reasoning, is something different from a vivid and firm conception of an object.

FROM his theory of belief, Mr. Hume deduces a theory of probability, which he holds

to depend, not on the abstract knowledge of the greater number of chances, but on the separate effect of each chance, in brightening conception. He supposes, that, where the number of chances is greater on one side, the mind is carried more frequently to one idea, than to its opposite. ‘The concurrence of these several views or glimpses imprints the idea more strongly on the imagination; gives it superior force and vigour; renders its influence on the passions and affections more sensible; and, in a word, begets that reliance or security, which constitutes the nature of belief and opinion.’ What theorem would not suffer from such a corollary! When, abstractly, we prefer five chances to one, what is the idea to which the mind is five times carried? If it be unity, our choice should be reversed. When we consider a thousand chances as having greater probability of success than nine hundred and ninety-nine, is the mind carried\* *one thousand nine hundred and ninety-*

\* IN his Treatise of Human Nature, Mr. Hume endeavours to account for our preference, in such cases,  
by



nine times to the different ideas? The comparison and the preference are the work of a

by the influence of *general rules*. ‘ We have a paralell instance,’ he observes, ‘ in the affections. ’Tis evident, that when an object produces any passion in us, which varies according to the different quantity of the object ; I say, ’tis evident, that the passion, properly speaking, is not a simple emotion, but a compounded one, of a great number of weaker passions, deriv’d from a view of each part of the object. For otherwise ’twere impossible the passion shou’d increase by the increase of these parts. Thus a man, who desires a thousand pound, has in reality a thousand or more desires, which uniting together, seem to make only one passion ; tho’ the composition evidently betrays itself upon every alteration of the object, by the preference he gives to the larger number, if superior only by an unite. Yet nothing can be more certain, than that so small a difference wou’d not be discernible in the passions, nor cou’d render them distinguishable from each other. The difference, therefore, of our conduct in preferring the greater, depends not upon our passions, but upon custom, and *general rules*. We have found in a multitude of instances, that the augmenting the numbers of any sum augments the passion, when the numbers are precise and the difference sensible. The mind can perceive from its immediate feeling, that three guineas produce a greater passion than two ; and *this* it transfers to larger numbers, because of the resemblance ; and by a general rule assigns to a thousand guineas, a stronger passion than to nine hundred

moment. The feeling of probability, on the hypothesis assumed, would be susceptible of

dred and ninety-nine.' VOL. i, p. 248. The very circumstance, which Mr. Hume thus adduces in illustration, is itself a most erroneous hypothesis. When we desire a thousand pounds, we have not a thousand separate desires, but one desire of that which will obtain us many objects of our wants, the composition being not in the mere pounds, but in the wants, which a large sum of money will gratify. It might be said, with equal truth, that we have twenty thousand desires, or two hundred and forty thousand desires, or nine hundred and sixty thousand desires, because there are so many shillings pence and farthings in a thousand pounds; and that, the exchangeable value of the whole sum remaining the same, the desire of it would be converted immediately into a different affection of mind, by a minuter division of our coinage. The truth is, that the desire of a thousand pounds, and the desire of nine hundred and ninety-nine pounds, in one who is in no direct want of a particular sum, are, considered absolutely as simple affections of the mind, exactly the same passion, being nothing more, than the desire of that which will give him a great deal of accommodation. To those, who, for any particular purpose, are in want of *a thousand pounds*, the desire of *nine hundred and ninety-nine pounds* would be different; because it would be compounded with the painful feeling of inadequacy. In like manner, when both sums are offered together, to our choice, or to our imagination, the two desires are not the same; because ~~the~~ general

perpetual increase, though it were known, that all the external circumstances of the compari-

neral desire of the power of accommodation, which is all that is felt, when each sum is considered *absolutely*, is, in the *relative* consideration, compounded with the idea of *greater* and *less* power. The only *general rule*, which is at all concerned, is the very obvious and simple one, that of *good* we prefer more to less, and of *evil* less to more. It is enough, for our preference, in any comparison, to know, that the objects are good, and that in one case the good is greater ; and it might be said, with as much truth, that we have a stronger passion for three guineas than for two, because we have a stronger passion for a thousand guineas than for nine hundred and ninety-nine, as that the passion is stronger, for the greater of these two sums, because it is stronger for three guineas than for two. It is, in the very nature of human passion, impossible for the mind to know, that a thousand guineas will procure as much good, as nine hundred and ninety-nine, and will also procure more, without the immediate preference of the greater sum. The difference of *three* and *two* is indeed an earlier piece of arithmetic, in the same manner as the letter A is usually taught before the letter X ; but we never think of saying, that we *transfer* to X our knowledge of A, or that in the knowledge of A there is any other difference, than that of arbitrary priority. The simple preference of *more* to *less good*, whatever the good may be, is surely a circumstance that is easily conceivable ; and, if it be not easy to be conceived, it cannot be said of the explanation which Mr. Hume  
has

n remained the same. By frequently suggesting one idea without even attempting to

has given, that it has rendered the preference at all more intelligible.

C BUT, though it be conceded to him, that his doctrine of the opposition of desires is just, and that it has the analogy, which he affirms, to the calculation of chances, there still remains the strongest of all objections to his theory of our belief of probability, in the particular case supposed, that it leaves the very difficulty, which it professes to remove. In those cases, in which the number of chances is on each side very great, it is confessed by him, that the idea of the object, to which we assign the greater probability, is not *brightened* by that *concurrence of glimpses*, which is the asserted cause of the brightness, in cases, in which the number of chances is on each side less. In the two comparisons, as far as we can depend on consciousness, there is no difference ; the assent being equally immediate, and of the same kind, when we prefer *a thousand* chances to *five hundred*, and *two* to *one*. But, even though it be admitted, that our consciousness deceives us in this apparent similarity, it is still necessary, that some circumstance be pointed out, as supplying, in the greater comparison, the place of those repeated glimpses, to which, in the less, so much influence is ascribed. The supposed *general rule* is nothing more than the remembered brightness of past conceptions : but the brightness of one idea is not the brightness of another idea. The greater number of *glimpses*, in one comparison,

remove any of the circumstances in which it is opposed by another idea, we might reverse the

comparison, may have rendered our conception of one object more vivid than of another : but it cannot transfer this effect to dissimilar objects, existing in a situation altogether dissimilar. If the effect be transferable, it may be communicated as much to the object which has nine hundred and ninety-nine, as to that which has a thousand chances. The only supposable reason, that it should not, is, that the latter number is the greater of the two. But, if the mere circumstance of greater number be sufficient to account for the difference, it may as readily account for the preference of *three* chances to *two*, in the original comparison supposed. In every calculation of probabilities, there is indeed nothing more, than the simple preference of *more* to *less*. The very supposition of more chances *implies* greater probability, and implies it, without any relation to the vividness of the ideas compared, and even where the greater vividness of ideas is on the opposite side ; as in many of those calculations of moral chances, in which our wishes are on one side, and our belief on the other.

At best, Mr. Hume's theory of probability serves but to render very complicated what is in itself very simple. The supposition of the influence of *general rules* involves also the inconsistency of supposing the feeling of probability to be something different from the comparative vividness of an idea ; though it be defined to be nothing more. It is not merely, when they are opposed

belief of the most accurate calculator. Expectation would soon be converted into certainty, and despair itself would be lost in the continual contemplation and desire of that improbable good which is its object.

THE general doctrine of belief is introduced by Mr. Hume, to illustrate the particular instance of causation. After two objects have been observed by us often to succeed each other, he supposes, that there is an easy transition of the mind, from one to the other; and that, in all such cases of easy transition to an object, ‘ the mind reaches a steadier and

posed to each other, in the chances of a result, that objects are comparatively vivid. They are infinitely various, in innumerable other respects: and therefore, if probability be nothing but greater vividness, it may be supposed to be influenced as much by the remembered liveliness of the whiter or warmer of two objects, as by the remembered liveliness of any other idea, which had been before accompanied with the feeling of probability. it is only from chances to chances, however, that the transferred brightness is supposed; and the very supposition is thus a tacit avowal, that probability is not the mere comparative vividness of an idea.

stronger conception of it, than what otherwise it would have been able to attain.' If the preceding theory of belief were true, it is obvious, that, admitting the fact as stated, we should indeed believe the second object to have real existence, but we should believe no more; as the only effect of the transition is to give us that stronger and steadier conception, on which belief of reality is supposed to depend. But the fact, as stated by Mr. Hume, has no meaning: for how, by transition, can the mind attain a *steadier and stronger* conception of an object, *than it otherwise would have been able to attain*, when the *idea* of an object, to use his own sense of that term, can be attained, *in no other way*, than by such a transition as that described; and *impressions* are allowed to be stronger than *ideas*, however vivid! There is, therefore, no possible ground of comparison. If it be not absurd to talk of\* laws of associa-

\* The cases of transition, or association of ideas, are by Mr. Hume divided into three classes, as they are referable to *resemblance*, *contiguity* in time and place, and *cause and effect*. It is not a little singular, that he who thus

tion, ideas do not rise by chance : every idea, therefore, if it rise at all, must rise according to those very principles of association, which *all*, it is contended, have the power of rendering our ideas more vivid than they would have been, or, in other words, more vivid than non-entities. But, even though we were to admit the existence of unsuggested ideas, with which suggested ideas might be compared, as of more strong and steady conception, Mr. Hume's proposition would be scarcely less nugatory, and would be equally inconsistent with the other parts of his doctrine. Instead of an order of associations of causes and effects, all associations would be accompanied with the belief of causation ; because all would ' carry

forms a separate class of *causes and effects*, should, in the next section, attempt to shew, that they are only uniform *contiguity*. It may be said, indeed, that the third class has reference to contiguity, not as casual and past, but as invariable and future, in accordance with the instinctive belief of causation. But it is only the *past* contiguity of causes and effects which can have formed associations in our mind : and the class is therefore superfluous ; as every case of it would still be implied in the second.



the mind' to the conception of the correlative, and therefore fix it in the conception, with greater steadiness and strength. The sight of a person who resembles our friend, the sight of the place at which we parted from our friend, the sight of the book which our friend wrote, or of the landscape which he painted, all agree in this respect, that they suggest to us immediately the idea of our friend. If, therefore, the suggestion, and consequent vividness of the suggested idea, be all, by which an uniform sequence produces in us the belief of causation, we should believe the relation of\*

\* In the Treatise of Human Nature, there is an attempt to obviate the force of this objection, by reasonings, which are one continued *petitio principii*, assuming, throughout, that difference of the relations of cause and effect, and of resemblance and contiguity, the discovery of which is the very circumstance objected. The preliminary part of the argument, which does nothing more, than repeat, in many words, that there are relations of cause and effect and of resemblance and contiguity, I omit, and quote the only passages which have even the semblance of reasoning. A sort of line of distinction is attempted to be drawn between the relations. 'Where upon the appearance of an impression, we not only feign another object, but likewise arbitrarily, and of our mere

cause and effect to exist, between our friend, and the person, and the place, as much as be-

good will and pleasure, give it a particular relation to the impression, this can have but a small effect upon the mind; nor is there any reason, why, upon the return of the same impression, we shou'd be determined to place the same object in the same relation to it. There is no manner of necessity for the mind to feign any resembling and contiguous objects; and if it feigns such, there is as little necessity for it always to confine itself to the same, without any difference or variation.' 'The relation of cause and effect, has all the opposite advantages. The objects it presents are fixt and unalterable. The impressions of the memory never change in any considerable degree; and each impression draws along with it a precise idea, which takes its place in the imagination, as something solid and real, certain and invariable. The thought is always determined to pass from the impression to the idea, and from that particular impression to that particular idea, without any choice or hesitation.' VOL. I, p, 194. Is it not obvious, that even this distinction, which is attempted to be made, implies the previous belief of causation in objects, *independently of the qualities of the present ideas*? For, in the *ideas* themselves, there is nothing peculiarly *precise*, and *solid*, and *real*; nor can the external *objects* be said to be more *fixed and unalterable*, when they suggest causation, than when they suggest resemblance. The ideas suggested by resemblance are not less vivid; nor is the mind, in its associations, less influenced by that relation, than by the relation of cause and effect. There is, therefore,

tween our friend, and the book, and the landscape. To suppose that any circumstance,

therefore, nothing, which can distinguish the cases of transition, unless we have a knowledge of their difference, which is independent of the transition. Mr. Hume seems to think, that there is a tendency in the mind, to pass uniformly from cause to effect, or from effect to cause, and not uniformly from resembling objects to each other : but there is no such peculiar tendency, as is supposed ; the sight of an object sometimes suggesting its possible effects, sometimes its cause, and, at least as often, suggesting some similar object, or circumstance, which was once connected with it by mere casual vicinity. Even though there were a peculiar tendency in the case of cause and effect, it is not *a general tendency*, which, on Mr. Hume's principles, can have any influence on present belief, but merely *the particular transition* and *the particular existing idea*. When we believe causation, it will be admitted, that we do not ' arbitrarily and of our mere good will and pleasure give a particular relation to the impression,' nor is there any ' choice and hesitation' in the mere transition : but there is surely as little choice and hesitation, when the picture of a friend in our possession suggests the person whom it resembles, as when it suggests the artist who painted it. In neither case can we be said to feel a necessity of confining ourselves to one object : for the picture might have suggested many co-existing circumstances of place and time, as well as the subject or the artist. We believe undoubtedly, that the artist alone, not any other person, was the cause of the existence of the painting : but the reason

which is not common to all these cases, is necessary to the belief, is to admit, that Mr. Hume's explanation is false ; and to suppose that nothing more is necessary, is to suppose, that all the thoughts of our mind, in our endless day-dreams of memory and imagination, appear to us a series of effects, or of causes. Whether they be effects or causes is, indeed, on Mr. Hume's principles, impossible to be determined. The son suggests the father, and the father the son ; the artist suggests the picture, and the picture the artist. If, previously to the liveliness of the ideas of suggestion, the two objects do not appear to us to be related, the father and the artist may seem as much to have the relation of effects, as of causes, to the son and the picture, the liveliness of suggestion being in both cases the same. In like manner, if liveliness of conception alone be necessary, our external *impressions*, differing from our

of our belief of this causation is not that Mr. Hume's theory is true, but that it is false ; the belief depending only on the known immediate sequence, and being altogether independent of the transition and vividness of particular ideas.

ideas in nothing but greater liveliness, should seem, whenever they disturb the course of our associated ideas, to have the relation of *effect* to that object, the idea of which immediately preceded the impression.

MR. HUME, indeed, very inconsistently, finds in the succession of ideas, something more than ideas which succeed. In considering them, he loses all his unwillingness to discover *connexion*. The transition itself, from one idea to another, he supposes to be felt, as a *third* thing, and from this felt relation, our idea of *power* to be derived. ‘ This connexion, therefore, which we *feel* in the mind, this customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant, is the sentiment or impression from which we form the idea of power or necessary connexion.’ ‘ When many uniform instances appear, and the same object is always followed by the same event, we then begin to entertain the notion of cause and connexion. We then *feel* a new sentiment or impression, to-wit, a customary connexion in the thought or imagination between one object and its usual attend-

ant ; and this sentiment is the original of that idea which we seek for.' But it is evident, that, though A suggest B a thousand times, a customary *connexion* is no more *felt* between these two ideas, than between any two events. They are still, to use Mr. Hume's language, only *conjoined*, as proximate in a sequence. We know only, that B has followed A a thousand times ; and neither A nor B is the idea of power. B may be suggested by A ; but we are conscious only of A, and afterwards of B, not of *the suggestion*, nor of any thing intermediate. Were we conscious of suggestion, or connexion, the full conception of power would be involved in the first association of the human mind, and all the scepticism of Mr. Hume would be nugatory. If, then, *connexion* be felt, and the existence of an external world have been admitted, the connexion may be conceived as much between external objects, as between our own thoughts ; and, if there be no connexion, but *proximity only*, the proximity is not closer between our ideas, than between those changes of external matter, which are

admitted by us to have preceded our perception. To find in *the knowledge of any past sequence*, even of that of our own thoughts, a prototype of *the feeling of future invariable sequence* is impossible. There is an assumption to be found in the belief, but not a copy. That, after the customary sequence of two objects, ‘the mind upon the appearance of one anticipates the senses, and forms immediately the idea of the other,’ is of no consequence. This, if it be any thing more than mere memory, is, at most, only expectation; and the *idea*, or copy, of this impression, is not power, for that is something more, but is only a fainter expectation, or a remembrance of expectation. In short, Mr. Hume’s account of the origin of the idea of power either proceeds on the existence of the idea of power, in our previous belief, or supposes it to be a copy of that from which it is completely different. It is enough for us to know, that the belief of similar antecedence and sequence is instinctive;—that our idea of power arises from our belief of that future similarity of events, or rather is in-

volved in the belief, and is only the feeling of invariable antecedence, attached to a particular object, in reference to another object, as its invariable consequent.

IT thus appears, that, as the circumstances, supposed by Mr. Hume to be peculiar to the phenomena which we term causes and effects, are, on his own principles, common to them, with all the other phenomena of mind, *all* those phenomena, or *none*, should be accompanied with the belief of causation. Unless he have previously taken for granted a distinction of certain objects only, as causes and effects, his attempted explanation must be unintelligible; and, if he have previously taken it for granted, his attempted explanation is useless. The truth is, that every endeavour to explain, what is allowed to be instinctive, is a species of trifling, which may perhaps approach the nature of wit, but which never can be philosophy. A simple statement of the fact is all, which, in such a case, is allowed us; and, though Mr. Hume's laboured 'solution' were as true



as it is false, the same difficulty, which his acuteness before pointed out, would follow his reasoning through all its steps. Whether the ideas be faint or vivid, the resemblance of the future to the past, the great and only circumstance which perplexes us, must still be *assumed*, not *inferred* from preceding phenomena. Against the possibility of such a theory as that of Mr. Hume, nature seemed to have sufficiently guarded, by giving us, without any reference to causation, a succession of trains of ideas, of every variety, from the full force of vivid perception, to the faintest shadowings of remembrance. What innumerable images arise every hour in the most unpoetic fancy ; and how small a part of life is composed of the actual impressions of external objects ! Resemblances, contiguities, and a thousand circumstances, which cannot be included in any formal class of associations, call us perpetually away to the world within. But, while we wander, as if led along by the spell of some intellectual enchantment, in that fairy world of thought, we are not always philosophizing, and fixing every rising idea, as the effect of a

preceding one. The brightness, with which they rise, serves only to make our reverie longer, and the illusion more painful, or more delightful. How then has Mr. Hume been able to deceive even himself?—If I may be allowed to speak quaintly, it is, perhaps, the very circumstance of the greatness of his error, which has prevented it from being perceived by his acute discernment: in other words, the belief of the relation is so immediate, and so completely independent of the circumstances stated by him, that, having already an instinctive, but accurate conception of causation, he did not feel, how inadequate the circumstances in his own statement were, to the original production of the belief.

It may be concluded, therefore, that firmness and liveliness of conception ought not to form any part of a theory of the belief of causation. *The consideration of events, as immediately prior and subsequent, is all which is necessary to the belief, that the priority and subsequence will be in all future cases the same.*

Such, at least, was probably the original state of the mind ; and such it would have continued, had only one event succeeded one event. The mode, in which this original tendency to belief is weakened, was stated in the consideration of the fourth proposition of Mr. Hume's theory. It was then shewn, that the effect of experience is different in different stages ; that its first tendency is to diminish the belief of future similarity, by presenting to us, in apparent sequence, parts of different co-existing trains of events ; that, however, even the doubt which follows is not, whether an event be *an* effect of *a* preceding one, but merely, of what preceding event it is the effect ; that, to aid our determination in this respect, is the secondary operation of experience, which informs us, in what particular cases we have not been disappointed in our original expectation ; and that, with the frequent renewal of this confirmation, our doubt, or suspense, is gradually removed.

It was in his attention only to the secondary operation of experience, that Mr. Hume's great

error consisted. But it is an error which does not affect the truth of the first part of his theory. Rejecting, therefore, the fourth and fifth propositions, we may admit the three which precede them, and believe, with him, that the relation of cause and effect between any two events cannot be *perceived, a priori*, when the first alone is presented to us ; that, even when both have taken place, the relation of future connexion cannot be *inferred by reason* ; but that the belief of it, immediate and universal, is the effect of *an instinctive principle of our nature*.

IN the preceding statement of the theory, and the endeavour to discriminate those parts of it which alone deserve our approbation, the office of philosophic criticism may seem to be fulfilled. But it is not enough, to have shewn, what Mr. Hume's theory *is* : the universal misconception of it renders it necessary, to shew also, what it *is not*. The author of the Essay, 'on the idea of necessary connexion,' has been uniformly represented, as denying the exist-

ence of the very idea of necessary connexion ; and though, since the publication of the work, which contained his inquiry into the *origin* of the idea of power, nearly seventy years have elapsed, it is still necessary to shew, that the word *power* is not considered by him, as altogether without meaning. That he does maintain it, to be a word altogether without meaning, is the positive assertion of Dr. Reid, and of the other philosophers, by whom the doctrine was originally opposed ; and this opinion, under the authority of respectable names, has become a sort of traditionary article of faith, and of wonder at the possible extent of human scepticism, so as to preclude even that very slight examination, which alone seems necessary to confute it.

THAT we have no idea of power whatever, which can enable us to form any distinction of the sequences of events, as casual or invariable, is, indeed, so completely opposite to every feeling of our mind, that the presumption is very strong, against the possibility of such an

opinion. In the case of Mr. Hume, this presumption is verified. He does not deny, that we have an idea of *power* or of *invariable priority* in sequences : he denies only that we can perceive or infer it, as a quality inherent in the subjects of a sequence.

ALL our *ideas* are considered by him, as copies of impressions. A very simple syllogism has therefore been formed for him : *We have no idea which is not a copy of some impression ; we have no impression of power ; we therefore have no idea of power.* The major proposition of this syllogism is unquestionably maintained by him : and to those, who know nothing more of Mr. Hume's doctrine, than that he held that proposition, and had also some peculiar opinions on the subject of power, the remaining propositions of the syllogism may be allowed to occur, as a very natural inference. But, when the mind has not been prepossessed by such an inference, it seems scarcely possible to read the Essays on the subject, without immediately perceiving, that the

minor and the conclusion should be reversed. The syllogism, which is truly involved in Mr. Hume's reasoning, is the following: *We have no idea which is not a copy of some impression; but we have an idea of power; there must therefore be some impression, from which that idea is derived.* The major proposition, which is drawn from too narrow an induction, is obviously false: but the mode, in which it has rendered his subsequent reasoning inaccurate, is very different from what has been supposed. It has not led him to deny the idea of power; but it has led him, from the necessity of finding its corresponding impression, to satisfy himself with a very erroneous theory of the idea, and to imagine that he had discovered its real prototype, where, but for the want of better resemblance, he would not have imagined that he had discovered the smallest similarity.

IN his Essays on the subject, Mr. Hume states first his 'sceptical doubts,' in which he establishes the impossibility of *perceiving* or

*inferring* any necessary connection in the parts of a sequence, an impossibility, which *seems* to render power a word without meaning. He then states his ‘sceptical solution of these doubts,’ in which he argues, that power *is not* a word without meaning, since we have an impression, from which it may be supposed to be copied, in the feeling of a customary connection of ideas, by which, after the experience of the sequence of two objects, the mind passes readily from the idea of one object to the idea of the other. That *the sceptical solution* which asserts the *actual existence* of the idea of power is, by being the subject of a new section, separated from *the sceptical doubts*, which assert the *seeming non-existence* of the idea of power, cannot surely disqualify it from being considered as a part of the theory, which is composed of both ; and indeed, in the single section ‘of the idea of necessary connection,’ they are recapitulated, in one continuous argument. Yet, by an oversight that is altogether unaccountable, Dr. Reid, and the other writers who have considered Mr. Hume’s



theory, neglect the solution of the doubts, as if it formed no part of the theory, and thus gain an easy triumph over a scepticism, which its author himself had been the first to overthrow.

It is surely no very uncommon mode of analytic disquisition, to proceed, step by step, in the search of a particular idea ; to remark at intervals, that there as yet *seems* to be no such idea, but that in our remaining progress we shall perhaps discover it ; and afterwards to conclude with remarking, that we have now discovered the idea which we sought : yet, in all such cases, if a part of the analysis were considered alone, the indisputable inference would be, that the existence of the idea was denied by the very sceptical inquirer. The mode of investigation described is exactly that, which Mr. Hume has pursued. He first seeks the source of the idea of necessary connection, in single instances of sequence : but in these he observes only one event preceding another, without being able to perceive any circum-

stance, from which he can *infer* similarity of their future successions. Such are the *sceptical doubts* that arise at one stage of the inquiry. ‘ All events seem entirely loose and separate. One event follows another ; but we never can observe any tie between them. They seem *conjoined*, but never *connected*. And as we can have no idea of any thing, which never appeared to our outward sense or inward sentiment, the necessary conclusion *seems* to be, that we have no idea of connexion or power at all, and that these words are absolutely without any meaning, when employed either in philosophical reasonings, or common life. BUT THERE STILL REMAINS ONE METHOD OF AVOIDING THIS CONCLUSION, AND ONE SOURCE WHICH WE HAVE NOT YET EXAMINED. When any natural object or event is presented, it is impossible for us, by any sagacity or penetration, to discover, or even conjecture, without experience, what event will result from it, or to carry our foresight beyond that object, which is immediately present to the memory and senses. Even after one in-

stance or experiment, where we have observed a particular event to follow upon another, we are not entitled to form a general rule, or foretel what will happen in like cases ; it being justly esteemed an unpardonable temerity to judge of the whole course of nature from one single experiment, however accurate or certain.

*But when one particular species of event has always, in all instances, been conjoined with another, we make no longer any scruple of foretelling one upon the appearance of the other, and of employing that reasoning, which can alone assure us of any matter of fact or existence. We then call the one object, CAUSE ; the other, EFFECT. WE SUPPOSE, THAT THERE IS SOME CONNEXION BETWEEN THEM ; SOME POWER IN THE ONE, BY WHICH IT INFALLIBLY PRODUCES THE OTHER, AND OPERATES WITH THE GREATEST CERTAINTY AND STRONGEST NECESSITY. It appears, then, that THIS IDEA OF A NECESSARY CONNEXION AMONG EVENTS arises from a number of similar instances, which occur, of the constant con-*

junction of these events.’\* He who thus endeavours to shew, *how the idea of necessary*

\* Whatever strength of evidence there may be supposed to be, in the reasoning quoted above, it seems scarcely possible to adduce it in favour of that opinion, which considers Mr. Hume, as denying *power*, and *cause*, and *connection*, to be *words that have a meaning*: and yet it has been adduced, not to prove, as might have been expected, that Mr. Hume *affirms*, but to prove, that he *denies* the existence of any of the ideas, which are supposed to be expressed in those words; this passage, this single passage, forming the whole basis of a late memorable argument, at the bar of the General Assembly of the National Church. In justice, however, to the acuteness of those, by whom the argument was advanced, it must be remembered, that the whole passage was not quoted by them. That part of it alone was brought forward, which contains the simple recapitulation of the ‘sceptical doubts;’ and the speakers had the uniform good fortune, to stop at the first passage printed in capitals, the very passage, at which, it was altogether necessary for their argument, to stop. To have proceeded to the very first words of the very next sentence, would have completely destroyed its force; as it would then have appeared, that, although, at one stage of investigation, the necessary conclusion *seemed* to be, that power was a word without meaning, *there still remained one method of avoiding this conclusion, and one source yet unexamined, in which the idea of power* is afterwards *affirmed to be found*. The word *seems*, being printed by  
Mr.

*connection arises, is asserted and believed to deny, that we have any idea, which can thus*

Mr. Hume in Italics, might have induced a suspicion, that it was so marked, to denote, by a peculiar opposition to the word *is*, that the rejection of the idea of power was only an *apparent* conclusion, at one stage of inquiry. Fortunately, however, for the argument of the opponents of the doctrine, no such suspicion was induced in their mind. Instead of being led by the doubtfulness of the expression, to consider it in reference to the succeeding sentence, they were led by it, only to an exercise of ingenuity, in endeavouring to shew, that the word *seems*, though so printed by Mr. Hume, was meant by him to have exactly the same meaning, as that stronger word, which is usually opposed to it.

THAT the partial quotation was intentionally and deliberately made, it would be uncandid to think. It may be accounted for, more charitably, by supposing, that none of the party, who took the lead in the alarm, and in the ecclesiastical prosecution of the doctrine, had ever read the context of the passage which they quoted, or had paid any attention to the original Essay which they condemned. In the works of Dr. Reid, there is an examination of the Essay, which seems to furnish, at less expence of thought, both a statement of its doctrine, and an exposure of its fallacies. It is, therefore, not improbable, that this easier mode, of studying by proxy a very obscure doctrine, had been preferred, and that, having afterwards accidentally opened the Essay on Necessary

*arise*. He proceeds to point out more particularly the original *impression*, in that con-

cessary Connection, at the unfortunate passage quoted by them, and having found it to coincide with the previous opinion received from Dr. Reid, they had not thought it necessary, to examine the context, or to extend their perusal of the Essay itself, to a single additional sentence.

It is impossible to make this supposition, to which we are in charity led, without reflecting how much very unpleasant animosity might have been spared, but for a single mistake, made at a considerable distance of time, by a philosopher who is no more,—or perhaps even had those, who took unnecessary alarm at the doctrine of a still earlier writer, but extended their reading to one single sentence of the very Essay which was the object of their dread, and of their public and zealous reprobation.

It is with extreme reluctance, I make this allusion to proceedings that are past. The circumstances of the controversy, which they involved, were such, as every sincere friend of religion deprecated and lamented. I do not wish to bring those circumstances again to memory. But, as a 'Report' of the argument to which I allude has been published, and is in general circulation, it becomes necessary, for the interest of liberality and philosophy, to point out the fallacy of a mis-statement, which has the semblance, as it is at present read, of giving strength to a charge, that is altogether destitute of support, when stripped of the aid of false quotation.

nection of the ideas of objects which he supposes to be felt by the mind, after experience of their sequence, and remarks, in a passage already quoted : ‘ This connexion therefore which we feel in the mind, this customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant, is the sentiment or im-

EVEN to those, by whom the false quotation was made, it may be ultimately a happy circumstance, to be thus excited to a perusal of the whole of that very short summary of reasoning, of which they had before attended only to a part ; as they will have the comfort of discovering, that the doctrine, which they justly considered as a most alarming one, has in truth no existence, or at least has no existence derived from the Essay on Necessary Connection. It was stated by them, as the great theological objection to that Essay, that its author, by denying the existence of the very idea of power, denied, in consequence, the possibility of the belief of divine power. It must, therefore, be consoling, to find, that, however false his theory *of the origin of the idea of power* may be, he still asserts, that *we have an idea of power*, and that, hence, the asserted impossibility of the idea of divine power does not follow from his theory ; since he allows, that we are led ‘ *to call one object CAUSE, and another EFFECT ; and to suppose, that there is some CONNECTION, between them, some POWER in the one, by which it infallibly PRODUCES the other, and OPERATES with the greatest CERTAINTY and strongest NECESSITY.*

pression FROM WHICH WE FORM THE IDEA OF POWER OR NECESSARY CONNEXION.’ If it be still requisite, to produce further evidence of his acknowledgment of the idea of power, as an affection of the mind which has actual existence, it may be found, in the short summary of the whole doctrine, with which he concludes the Essay. ‘ To recapitulate, therefore, the reasonings of this section : every idea is copied from some preceding impression or sentiment ; and where we cannot find any impression, we may be certain that there is no idea. In all single instances of the operation of bodies or minds, there is nothing that produces any impression, nor consequently can suggest any idea, of power or necessary connexion. But when many uniform instances appear, and the same object is always followed by the same event ; WE THEN BEGIN TO ENTERTAIN THE NOTION OF CAUSE AND CONNEXION. We then *feel* a new sentiment or impression, to-wit, a customary connexion in the thought or imagination between one object and its usual attendant ; AND THIS SENTI-



MENT IS THE ORIGINAL OF THAT IDEA WHICH WE SEEK FOR.' The whole argument is nothing more, than an expansion of that syllogism, which was formerly proposed, as the key to all Mr. Hume's speculations on the subject : *We have no idea which is not a copy of some impression ; we have an idea of power ; there is therefore an impression of it, to be somewhere found.*

As the doctrine was not originally delivered by Mr. Hume, in the form, in which it now appears in his Essays, it may perhaps be thought, that some considerable change was made in it, and that, originally, it may have been such, as with reason to give rise to the opinion of it, which still prevails. Yet, if we examine the Treatise of Human Nature, we shall find the doctrine to be the same, implying throughout the belief of the idea of power, and *appearing* sceptically, at certain stages, to doubt its existence, only because at certain stages the supposed requisite prototype has not been found. The section '*Of the idea of necessary*

*connection,*' commences with the following summary: 'Having thus explained the manner, *in which we reason beyond our immediate impressions, and conclude that such particular causes must have such particular effects*; we must now return upon our footsteps to examine that question which first occurred to us, and which we dropt in our way, *viz. what is our idea of necessity, when we say that two objects are necessarily connected together*. Upon this head I repeat, what I have often had occasion to observe, that as we have no idea, that is not derived from an impression, we must find some impression, that gives rise to this idea of necessity, if we assert we have really such an idea. In order to this I consider, in what objects necessity is commonly supposed to be; and finding that it is always ascribed to causes and effects, I turn my eye to two objects supposed to be placed in that relation; and examine them in all the situations of which they are susceptible. I immediately perceive that they are *contiguous* in time and place, and that the object we call cause, *pre-*

*cedes* the other we call effect. In no one instance can I go any farther, nor is it possible for me to discover any third relation betwixt these objects. I therefore enlarge my view to comprehend several instances; where I find like objects always existing in like relations of contiguity and succession. At first sight this seems to serve but little to my purpose. The reflection on several instances only repeats the same objects; and therefore can never give rise to a new idea. But upon farther inquiry I find, that the repetition is not in every particular the same, but produces a new impression; AND BY THAT MEANS THE IDEA, WHICH I AT PRESENT EXAMINE. For after a frequent repetition, I find, that upon the appearance of one of the objects, the mind is *determined* by custom to consider its usual attendant, and to consider it in a stronger light upon account of its relation to the first object. 'Tis this impression, then, or *determination*, WHICH AFFORDS ME THE IDEA OF NECESSITY.' In innumerable other passages of the Treatise, *the existence of the idea of power* is equally

affirmed ; and, even when doubts of its existence are expressed, they are qualified by phrases, that limit the application of the doubt to those mere words of mystery, which our scholastic nomenclature has combined with invariableness of antecedence.

THE history of *the origin of the idea of power*, which is thus delivered by Mr. Hume, is, as I have endeavoured to shew in a former part of this work, altogether inaccurate and inadmissible. The belief of power is immediately intuitive, not borrowed from any *resemblance* in the transitions of thought. But, *whether the theory of power advanced by him be a just theory*, is one question : *whether he deny that we have any idea of power*, is another question. He may be right in the latter question, and be wrong in the former. An error in the former question does not necessarily involve any dangerous consequences ; for, if we be irresistibly determined, as he allows, to ascribe to the prior objects of a sequence that invariableness of priority, which constitutes

power, we have all which is necessary to any arguments, that are founded on the belief of power: the denial of the idea, in the latter question, necessarily involves the most dangerous consequences; for, if we can conceive it possible, that it should be adopted by any one, it must immediately deprive him of that which is measurable by no earthly enjoyment,—the consolation and the peace, and the happiness, and, I may add, the *virtue* of a filial security in the existence of the great Father of mankind. It is, therefore, no common misrepresentation of a theory, to ascribe to it falsely a denial of the idea of power; and to ascribe it to the theory of Mr. Hume is assuredly a misrepresentation.

THE circumstances, which Dr. Reid has urged, in opposition to this almost inconceivable scepticism, which he ascribes to Mr. Hume, are, we shall accordingly find, equally consistent with Mr. Hume's theory, as with that which he has himself asserted. Nor is this harmony of the theories at all wonderful: for, that we are determined by an irresistible

instinct, to the belief of *invariableness of antecedence*, is allowed by Mr. Hume,—that our belief of *power* is intuitive, is the opinion of Dr. Reid,—and, however opposite his language may be, *invariableness of antecedence* is the very *power* for which Dr. Reid contends. His arguments for the existence of the idea of power, therefore, instead of being, as he supposed, demonstrative of the falseness of Mr. Hume's reasoning, must be allowed to form a strong additional support of it; since it will appear, on examination, that the belief of *invariableness of antecedence* is all which is essentially comprized in those very arguments, that are adduced as involving necessarily the existence of the idea of *power*.

FOR the purpose of examination, I copy from Dr. Reid the paragraph, in which he recapitulates his arguments.

‘ THE arguments I have adduced, are taken from these five topics : 1. That there are many things that we can affirm or deny concerning

power, with understanding. 2. That there are, in all languages, words signifying, not only power, but signifying many other things that imply power, such as action and passion, cause and effect, energy, operation, and others. 3. That in the structure of all languages, there is an active and passive form in verbs and participles, and a different construction adapted to these forms, of which diversity no account can be given, but that it has been intended to distinguish action from passion. 4. That there are many operations of the human mind familiar to every man come to the use of reason, and necessary in the ordinary conduct of life, which imply a conviction of some degree of power in ourselves and in others. 5. That the desire of power is one of the strongest passions of human nature.' ESSAYS ON THE ACT. POWERS, ESS. I, CHAP. 2.

It is scarcely possible to read these arguments, without perceiving immediately, that they confound *loose and variable* with *invariable* sequences. If there be any bold sceptic,

who denies that we expect, in future, a similarity of result, from circumstances similar to the past, the force of the proof must be allowed to be irresistible : but it is of no force, when directed against that very different theory, which allows that we are determined by the very nature of our mind, to expect, in all future time, from similar circumstances a similarity of result.

THAT there are ‘ many things that we can affirm or deny concerning power, with understanding,’ is an evident consequence of this principle. We may say, of a loadstone, that it *has the power* of attracting iron, which gold *has not* ; because we have observed the past difference of the sequence, when, after making the experiment with gold, a loadstone was substituted, and because we believe, that the approach of a loadstone will *continue* to be followed by the motion of iron, which gold, *as before*, will suffer to remain at rest. In like manner we rely on the muscular strength of one man, as greater than the strength of an-



other, because we have seen the one to sink beneath a burthen, which the other sustained with ease. The observations on power, included by Dr. Reid in the reasonings of this argument, may perhaps be thought to deserve our attention. ‘ 1. Power is not an object of any of our external senses, nor even an object of consciousness.’ This agrees completely with what has been stated, as the first proposition of Mr. Hume’s theory. ‘ 2. A second observation is, That as there are some things of which we have a direct, and others of which we have only a relative conception, power belongs to the latter class.—Our conception of power is relative to its exertions, or effects. Power is one thing ; its exertion is another thing.’ This is only to say, that *invariableness of antecedence* is one thing, and *one single fact of antecedence* is another thing. ‘ 3. It is evident that power is a quality, and cannot exist without a subject to which it belongs.’ Assuredly, there can be no invariableness of sequence, without antecedents and consequents. ‘ 4. We cannot conclude the want of power from its not being ex-

erted ; nor from the exertion of a less degree of power, can we conclude that there is no greater degree in the subject.' Invariableness of sequence is supposed, *when the previous circumstances are similar* ; but we cannot predict events, when the circumstances are different. From the mere silence of any one, we cannot infer that he is dumb in consequence of organic imperfection. He may be silent, only because he has no desire of speaking, not because speech would not have followed his desire : and it is not with *the mere existence* of any one, but with his *desire of speaking*, that we suppose *utterance* to be connected. A man, who has no desire of speaking, has, in truth and in strictness of language, no power of speaking, when in that state of mind ; since he has not a circumstance, which, as immediately prior, is essential to speech : but, since he has that power, as soon as the new circumstance of desire arises, and as the presence or absence of the desire cannot be perceived but in its effects, there is no inconvenience in the common language, which ascribes the power, as if

it were possessed at all times, and in all circumstances of mind ; though, unquestionably, nothing more is meant, than that the desire existing will be followed by utterance. ‘ 5. There are some qualities that have a contrary, others that have not ; Power is a quality of the latter kind.’ This is a proposition of no value, and has no relation to the general argument.

IN all languages, there must be such words, as *action*, *passion*, *cause*, *effect*, &c. if in all nations the sequences of events be supposed to be invariable. That, which existing is always followed by a change, is very different from that of which the change always follows something prior ; and it, therefore, is not wonderful that different names should have been invented, to express the difference. The deflagration of gunpowder will be expected from the contact of a spark, with equal certainty, whether we say, that a spark, in such circumstances, *is always followed* by deflagration, or, merely using different words, say, that the

spark has *an active power* of deflagrating gunpowder.

To the same principle are to be traced the different forms of verbs. A spark *kindles* gunpowder : gunpowder *is kindled by* a spark. It is as little wonderful, that there should be active and passive verbs, as that there should be such words, as *before* and *after*, *first* and *second*.

WE proceed on the belief of power, both in ourselves and others, because we proceed on the belief, that similar circumstances will always have similar results. I resolve to walk with my friend ; for I believe, that my desire of moving my limbs will be followed by their motion : I trust, that my friend will accompany me ; for I believe, that in him there will be a similar sequence of motions to desires, and that the separate desires, which precede the separate motions, will follow his general expressed intention, in the same manner as they have usually followed it.

AMBITION is the desire of power ; and ambition is a passion that is felt by us. But the desire of power is nothing more than the desire of being obeyed : and we trust, that, in certain circumstances, we shall be obeyed by the multitude ; because we believe, that similar motives of fear and hope will continue to be followed by similar actions. If we believe those sequences to be invariable, it is not more wonderful, that power should be desired, and that there should thus be a passion of ambition, than that food should be desired by the hungry or by the luxurious, who expect from it the same relief from uneasiness, and the same pleasure, which they remember to have before received from it.

SUCH are the arguments of Dr. Reid, which, though they may be allowed to prove, if proof were necessary, that we do not consider the succession of events, as altogether irregular, cannot surely be considered, as implying any circumstance, which is not implied in the theory of Mr. Hume. *Power* is only a shorter sy-

nonimous expression of *invariableness of antecedence* ; and the invariableness is not a quality of bodies, capable of being perceived or inferred, but is ascribed to them only by our intuitive belief.

IF, however, our belief of power be thus shewn to depend, not on perception, nor on reason, but on an instinctive feeling, may not this statement give rise to the denial of power, and may not atheism itself, with all its guilt and wretchedness, be made to flow from it ? That this objection should have been at any time made by philosophers, is indeed unaccountable ; though it may be easily accounted for in those looser thinkers, who, being little accustomed to philosophical inquiry, may never have attended to the nature of that evidence on which all inquiry ultimately rests. Many of Mr. Hume's doctrines are indeed dangerous in the extreme, as destructive of christianity, of belief in a future state, and of every sublime conception of Deity ; but it would be difficult to mention any great general theory,

either of matter or of mind, from which less practical danger can be supposed to flow, than from the preceding simple theory of causation. The whole supposed danger is included in this proposition, that the relation of cause and effect is an object of universal belief alone, not of perception, nor of reason. If the instinct be fallacious, it may be said, there is no power ; but, if instinct be fallacious, is there power, whatever be our theory ? Is not the truth of our perception, the truth of our reasonings, and every physical truth, dependent on the belief of certain intuitive principles ? And is the supposed danger to be confined to Mr. Hume's theory, if it be impossible, even for our imagination, to devise one, to which *exactly the same objection* is not equally applicable ? Let us suppose, that, instead of his sceptical negations, every proposition had been affirmative ;—let us first suppose him to have maintained power to be discoverable, *a priori*, in short, to be *perceived* like light and sound ; would the truth of this statement, even though we admitted it without

objection, be absolute and independent, or rather would it not still be dependent on a principle, involved in the belief, which we attach to perception? Is it an absurd and unintelligible proposition, that the external qualities, which we consider as perceived by us, do not exist, or even that the very opposite of what we perceive may exist? It is a proposition, I own, to which no one assents: but it is a conceivable proposition; and the only reason of our withholding our assent is, that, from a principle of our nature, we find it impossible not to believe, that we perceive realities, and that the realities, which we perceive, exist as we perceive them. In like manner, it is a conceivable proposition, that, notwithstanding the most frequent and uniform proximity in the succession of two objects, the relation of cause and effect, or of invariable future sequence, may not exist between them: but it is a proposition, which, in like manner, we cannot believe; and the only reason of our disbelief is, that, from a principle of our nature, we find it impossible, in such circumstances, not to be-



lieve the relation. Let us next suppose, that Mr. Hume had maintained the relation to be discoverable by a process of reasoning, and that the truth of his theory was admitted by us as logically demonstrated ; could we say of this truth, that it is in the strictest sense of the terms, *absolute* and *independent* of all imaginable contingency ?—It must on the contrary be said of this also, that it depends on the truth of an instinctive principle. That the propositions between which we perceive agreement, may yet have no agreement, is not an unintelligible proposition ; and why, in any particular instance, do we not assent to it ? It is not from the perceived agreement of any other propositions ; for that must equally proceed on the assumption : it is only because, by a principle of our nature, we find it impossible not to believe the absolute truth of that which is relative only to our individual powers of comparison. Is this less an instinctive principle, than that by which we are led inevitably to the belief of the relation of cause and effect ? Is it alone universal, and the other partial ? Or, if there be

degrees, have we not rather a more undoubting belief, that an event, which we witness, is an effect of some preceding change, than that the result of any of our logical inferences from the appearances of things is absolutely true? It is conceivable, without any difference of those mental affections which form the whole of our consciousness, that man might have been created, capable of perceiving, or rather of imagining that he perceived external qualities, where there are none,—of inferring agreement, where there is none,—of supposing causation, where there is none. He cannot think, that he was so created, in any one of these three cases; but, that he cannot, is, in all the three cases, and in all alike, owing to an instinctive principle, and to it alone. What then shall we say of the danger of negations, which remains exactly the same, when the negations are reversed? If the ultimate evidence be of the same kind, the possibility of mistake is not diminished, but increased, by the number of propositions; and, therefore, Mr. Hume, if he had asserted the belief of power to arise

from a strict and unerring process of ratiocination, not from an immediate instinct, would have asserted a theory, the truth of which was certainly not less dependent, and which, if there were any difference, was even more liable to mistake.

It may be remarked also, of the demonstrations of reasoning, that, in addition to the general instinctive principle of belief involved in the separate propositions, there is always some primary proposition, of which the truth is as much assumed as that of causation, which serves as the basis of the propositions that follow. The force of the objection is thus *doubled*, when applied to any theory, which derives the belief of power from a process of reasoning.

To assert the instinctive origin of the belief, it appears then, is, if the instinct be real, to fix it on the firmest possible foundation. Whatever may be thought of the truth of the assertion, it is surely not to be confounded with that vain and frivolous scepticism, which would affect to deny the reality of the instinct ;

and yet, from the opposition which has been made to the simple analysis in Mr. Hume's theory, it might be supposed, that, not content with denying the possibility of perceiving, *a priori*, or of inferring by reason, the invariable future sequence of any two objects, he had denied also, that such a sequence is an object of our belief. The misconception of this part of his doctrine has been already pointed out. The\* universality of the instinct, and the irresistible influence on our reasoning and conduct, with which it is accompanied, are brought forward by him on every occasion, and are, in truth, as has been shewn, the very difficulty, which, inconsistently indeed, but industriously, he labours to solve. On whatever

\* Nothing can be stronger, and more explicit, than the language of Mr. Hume: 'This belief,' he observes, 'is the necessary result of placing the mind in such circumstances. It is an operation of the soul, when we are so situated, as unavoidable as to feel the passion of love, when we receive benefits; or hatred, when we meet with injuries. All these operations are a species of natural instincts, which no reasoning or process of the thought and understanding is able, either to produce, or to prevent.' Section V, Part I.

principle the force of experience depend, ‘none but a fool or a madman,’ he observes, ‘will ever pretend to dispute the authority of experience, or to reject that great guide of human life.’ Of our first principles, indeed, it may be remarked, that the very supposition of them, as † *fundamental laws of human belief*, implies the inefficiency of any system of reasoning, which would exclude them from our belief; and even the libertine scepticism, which in words attacks their very existence, is dangerous, not by destroying the force of those principles, which is impossible, as long as we are men, but only by diminishing, as it were by a general analogy, in the cases of moral and religious restraint, that awful reverence for the best impressions of our early belief, which

† I borrow the phrase from Mr. Stewart, who expresses by it, with much greater elegance and precision, those intuitive truths, which were by Dr. Reid ascribed to the principle of *common sense*. Had the phrase been originally used by Dr. Reid himself, how much would have been spared of that verbal declamation about a name, which assumed, with very false pretensions, the honourable shape of a philosophic controversy!

arises, not so much from their certainty, as from their never having been questioned. But the scepticism of Mr. Hume on cause and effect,—if the suspicious name of *scepticism* must be given to a question of the justest philosophic analysis,—consists, not in denying any one of our first principles, but in tracing to one of them, as the ultimate source, the force of our various reasonings on cause and effect.

WHEN Bishop Berkeley, not content with hesitating as to the grounds of our belief in an external world, boldly denied its existence, what dangerous consequences might have been supposed to flow from the denial ! How absurd did moral virtue become, to man, who was for ever in a state of solitude ; and what magnificent arguments for the existence of a Deity were annihilated in the general desolation produced by a few propositions ! These desolating propositions are, in the strictness and accuracy of mere logic, completely unanswerable. No evil consequence, indeed, can flow

from them ; but it is only because they are at variance, not with strict *demonstrative truth*, but with that *instinctive belief*, which, as it is the ultimate source of all conviction, is paramount to demonstration. The instinct, by which we consider the sensations of our mind, as *marks* of the existence of an external world, is too powerful, to be weakened by any theory ; and even the celebrated sceptic who opposed it, inconsistently but amiably pious and benevolent, was, at the time of his opposition, so completely under its influence, as to deliver his theory, professedly for the confutation of those very freethinkers and atheists, whose actual nonexistence his theory implied.

WHEN we address a philosopher, who knows, that it is to an instinctive principle alone our sensations are evidence of things external, we believe, as much as when we address the vulgar, that he will be moved by the reasonings which are founded on the belief of external things ; because it is his belief alone, not the source of it, which we address. If that belief

be the same, whether it be intuitive, or demonstrative, his emotions and actions will be the same. He will hate, and fear, and despise, and love, alike in either case. In the same manner, if a philosopher believe the relation of cause and effect, every reasoning, founded on that belief, will be the same, whether the relation be intuitive, or demonstrative; and we have *exactly the same reason* to fear, that the common duties of social life will be altogether omitted by him, because he knows that his belief of external existence is intuitive, as that he will deny any power whatever, because he regards as intuitive his belief of cause and effect. It may be imagined, perhaps, that by the knowledge of the real source of belief, the influence of the belief itself will be diminished; but to know, that it is founded on an universal and irresistible instinct, is to know that it has the surest foundation, on which demonstration itself can be built.

How many perplexities are involved, in the whole doctrine of infinities! Yet we do not



less believe the doctrine of the infinite divisibility of matter, because the most ludicrous absurdities may be logically inferred from it. It may be proved unanswerably, that no portion of the earth's surface, however small in appearance, can ever be traversed by a moving body, however rapid its motion may be : for to pass from one point to another, some time, however small, is requisite ; and therefore, as the space supposed is infinitely divisible, to pass over an infinite number of parts must require an infinite number of times. Yet, though the conclusion be *logically* irresistible, it is a conclusion, at which we smile only, without admitting it ; and we certainly should be astonished at the zeal of any devout mathematician, who should be shocked with the dangerous consequences of the doctrine of the infinite divisibility of matter, because it might be shewn from it, that the children of Israel must have spent a whole eternity, before they could have passed through the Red sea. There are principles of independent feeling, in the human mind, which save it from the fol-

lies of its own ratiocinations. By these, we can believe, where there is no argument, and can disbelieve, where there is argument without a single demonstrative imperfection.

IN ascribing the belief of cause and effect to an instinctive principle, Mr. Hume has placed it on the same foundation, with our belief of an external world, and even of our own identity. What daring atheist is he, who has ever truly disbelieved the existence of himself and others? For it is he alone, who can say, *that he is an atheist, because there is no relation of cause and effect.* Mr. Hume's doctrine may, indeed, have been dangerous, to him who does not go to bed that he may sleep, nor rise that he may enjoy another day, nor stretch out his hand to grasp an object, nor eat that he may satisfy his hunger : but it is only to that wonderful individual, as yet unimported to us from any foreign country, that the doctrine can have had any evil consequence ; for he who performs a single action of daily life, in reliance on the similarity of the future to the past, *has*

*already confessed the existence of God, as far as the belief of the existence of God depends on the belief of causation.* If, as Mr. Hume confesses, ‘none but a fool or a madman’ will deny the authority of that principle, he confesses, that none but a fool or a madman will deny the just reasonings, which are founded on that principle. The theism, which flows from it, will, therefore, be as much believed by him, as the simple proposition, which also flows from it, that fire will warm him to-morrow; or, if he affect to disbelieve the theism, he will state, as the reason of his disbelief, some supposed inconsistency in parts of the ratiocination, not his doubt of that fundamental principle, by which alone, he can expect warmth from the fire of to-morrow. ‘Nature,’ as Mr. Hume has well observed, ‘will always maintain her rights, and prevail, in the end, over any abstract reasoning whatsoever. Though we should conclude, for instance, that, in all reasonings from experience, there is a step taken by the mind, which is not supported by any argument or process of the un-

derstanding ; there is no danger, that these reasonings, on which almost all knowledge depends, will ever be affected by such a discovery. If the mind be not engaged by argument to make this step, it must be induced by some other principle, of equal weight and authority ; and that principle will preserve its influence as long as human nature remains the same.'

WHEN we examine the theories of atheism, which have been given to the world, and which have produced any impression on the weak and unfortunate minds, that have been subject to their influence, we find many, which are founded on narrow views of the universe,—on an unwillingness to discover in it marks of creative design and goodness,—and even on the very *excess*, if it may be so termed, of *the belief of causation*, which, supposing the particles of matter to possess within themselves a principle of mysterious agency, that connects them with each other in all their various changes, and operates, in this connection, by

eternal necessity, seems to allow no Deity, unless perhaps the god of Epicurus. Theories of all these kinds we discover; but we find none which are founded on any general disbelief, that forbids us to expect warmth from fire, and satiety from food. Even he, who professes to discover no traces of the designs of a Creator, is himself a designer every moment; and little reason is there, therefore, to fear the atheistic effects of any doctrine, *which does not prevent us, if the theological argument be well stated, from having as much belief in the existence of God, as we have in our own continued existence, or in the existence of the friend, who is sitting beside us, or in the warmth of fire, and the coldness of snow.*

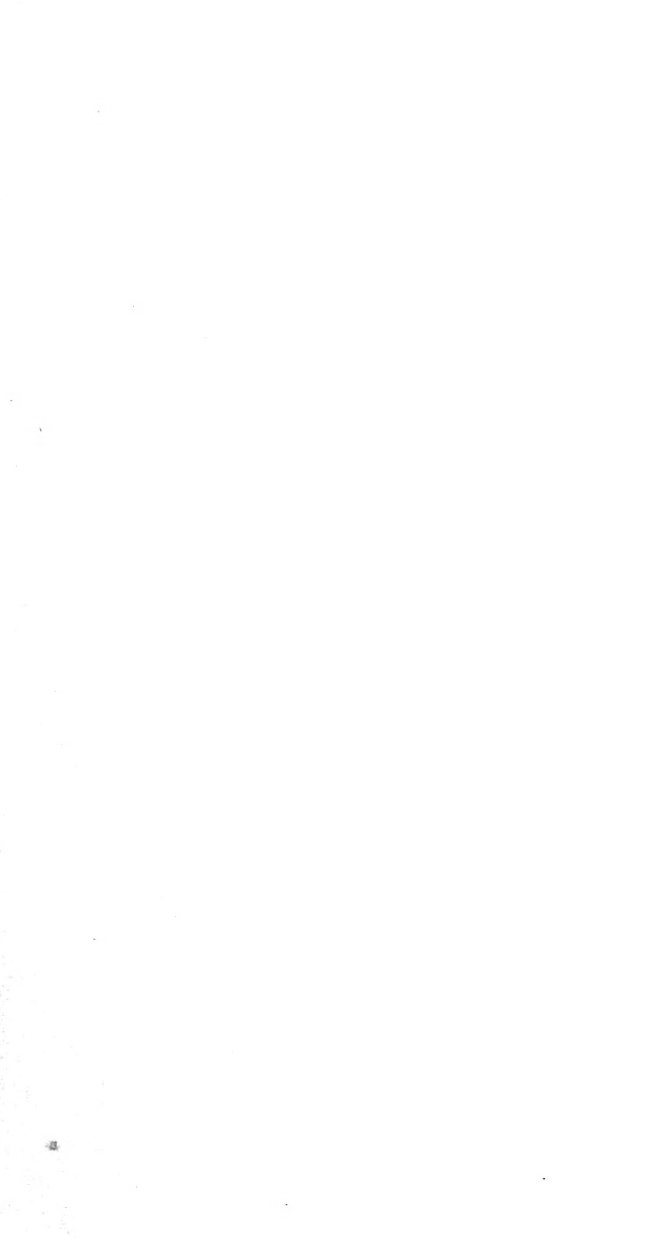
THE suspicion, attached to this doctrine of Mr. Hume, must have arisen from the general character of his writings, not from attention to this single part of them; for, as all are able to catch a general character, and few are able to weigh and appreciate the works from which

that character has arisen, there are many, who hate and dread a name, without knowing, for what particular circumstances the name should be dreaded. The just and beautiful analysis, which reduces our expectation of similarity in the future trains of events to intuition, we may therefore safely adopt, without any fear of losing a single argument for the existence of God ;—till it be shewn, that physical demonstration itself is not dependent on an instinctive principle, and that, hence, if the belief of power had depended, not on instinct, but on reason, it would have rested on a principle of surer evidence.









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